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## Choosing Music: Why Students Study Music in an Australian Secondary School

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# **Choosing Music: Why Students Study Music in an Australian Secondary School**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**From**

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

**By**

**Claire Rogerson, B.Prim Ed (Hons)**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION,  
FACULTY OF ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

**March, 2021**

## **Declaration**

I, Claire Louise Rogerson, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Claire Louise Rogerson

March, 2021

This research has been conducted with the support of the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

## Abstract

Music plays a significant role in the lives of adolescents, supporting young people to regulate emotions, relate to others and develop a sense of identity. Music education is shown to have wide-reaching benefits on student motivation, engagement and well-being at school. Despite this, only a small number of students choose to study Music at school beyond the compulsory curriculum, with attrition associated to a lack of value, interest or perceived relevance of the subject to the individual. Existing research has adopted motivational theory to investigate student choice; what is not known is the full range of factors affecting the student choice of Music education in Australian secondary schools. The General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) (Eccles, 1983) is a motivational framework proposing four main groups of variables which influence student choice, persistence and achievement in school subjects and tasks. Previous research has applied GMAC to understand why students choose subjects beyond the compulsory curriculum, such as STEM, however the framework has yet to be applied to Music.

This qualitative embedded case study applied GMAC to investigate factors influencing students' choice of Music education in one NSW Australian secondary school. From this site, three Music classes, including Years 8, 9 and 11, taught by the same teacher were chosen to represent the different levels of choice available to students in the secondary curriculum. A total of 14 participants were purposefully selected from these classes. Data were collected across three phases during one school year. Data collection tools included interviews, observations, learning documents used in class activities, and student surveys. The data were analysed in three phases. The first phase involved preliminary analysis of all data sources to identify emerging themes which would inform the subsequent phases. The second phase of data analysis focused on individual participant cases followed by a cross-case analysis. The third and final deductive phase of analysis focused on the application of a GMAC lens to understand the student choice of subjects.

Analysis uncovered seven emergent themes, which could be grouped broadly into the external and individual influences on choice, as well as the future relevance that participants ascribed to studying Music. External learning environment influences, mediated by teachers and peers, were shown to positively affect the ways students engaged with Music, their level of enjoyment and comfort within the classroom. However, findings of this study suggest students make choices based on individual factors of liking, wanting or needing the information and skills



within the subject of Music. Enjoyment of the subject and related activities appear to have a positive influence on participants' initial desire to choose to study Music, while the identification of a purpose or goal encourages persistence within the subject and tasks.

Theoretically, the application of GMAC to the choice of Music as a subject, emphasises the significance of individual factors in developing value for Music education. Enjoyment and interest were shown to impact the intrinsic value and choice of students, while their goals and self-definition developed a utility value for Music and directly influenced persistence. Due to the limited scope of the study, future investigation is recommended into the choice students make in relation to different Music curricular and global teaching contexts. Such an understanding may help teachers to appreciate the importance of enjoyment and interest when developing initial experiences to engage students in Music education. Furthermore, by supporting students to understand the future relevance of Music skills and knowledge, teachers can help to establish a utility value for Music education. These findings add contemporary qualitative detail to the field about factors that influence student choice to engage in Music education in NSW Australian secondary schools.

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## List of Figures

### Figures in Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Figure 2.1. <i>NESA K-6 Time Allocation Guide for Key Learning Areas (where 6-10% represents 1.5-2.5hrs in a typical teaching week) (NESA, 2019)</i> .....	20
Figure 2.2. <i>The Progression of Music Education in New South Wales, within the Curriculum and beyond</i> .....	22

### Figures in Chapter 3 – Methodology

Figure 3.1. <i>Model of Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) Components</i> .....	52
Figure 3.2. <i>The General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC)</i> .....	53
Figure 3.3. <i>Model of Embedded Case Study Design, Presenting Shared Site Context, Subsets and Participants from Chestnut High School</i> .....	61
Figure 3.4. <i>Model of Phase 1 Data Analysis Procedures</i> .....	78

### Figures in Chapter 7 – Discussion

Figure 7.1. <i>Model of Choice Points in the NSW Music Education Curriculum</i> .....	235
Figure 7.2. <i>Model of the Influence of Affect and Interest on Intrinsic Value and Choice</i> .....	237
Figure 7.3. <i>Model of the Influence of Goals and Self-Definition on Utility Value and Choice</i> .....	238
Figure 7.4. <i>Model of the Influence of Individual Factors on Values Related to the Choice of Music Education</i> .....	252
Figure 7.5. <i>Model of the Influence of Individual Factors on Expectancies Related to the Choice of Music Education</i> .....	257
Figure 7.6. <i>Revised Model of Academic Choices related to Music Education as a Result of this Study</i> .....	258

## List of Tables

### Tables in Chapter 3 - Methodology

Table 3.1. <i>Phases of On-Site Data Collection</i> .....	67
Table 3.2. <i>Distribution of Mini-Survey Questions across Subsets</i> .....	72
Table 3.3. <i>Distribution Between Subsets and Total Number of Lessons Observed and Formal Notes Recorded During Site Visits</i> .....	74
Table 3.4. <i>Types of Notes Collected During Site Visits</i> .....	75
Table 3.5. <i>Summary of Codes, Descriptors and Subclassifications</i> .....	79

### Tables in Chapter 4 – Case Vignettes

Table 4.1. <i>Summary of Participants and General Demographic Information</i> .....	91
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### Tables in Chapter 5 – Emergent Themes

Table 5.1. <i>Participants Not Involved in Formal Instrument Lessons</i> .....	153
Table 5.2. <i>Participants Involved in Formal Instrument Lessons</i> .....	153
Table 5.3. <i>Participant Memories of Primary School Activities</i> .....	158
Table 5.4. <i>Career Aspirations of Participants</i> .....	194

### Tables in Chapter 6 – Cross-Case Analysis

Table 6.1. <i>Summary of Participant Choices Related to Music Education, and their Intentions to Continue</i> .....	209
Table 6.2. <i>Summary of Participants' Experiences with Music Education</i> .....	218
Table 6.3. <i>Participants' Future Aspirations and Relevance of School Music</i> .....	223
Table 6.4. <i>Participant Measures of, and Influences on Self-Concept</i> .....	226
Table 6.5. <i>Participant Perceptions of Difficulty</i> .....	229

## Table of Contents

<i>Declaration.....</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Abstract .....</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements .....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Figures.....</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of Tables.....</i>	<i>vii</i>
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Background to the Study .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Significance of the Study .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.4 Research Questions .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.5 Research Strategy.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.7 Definition of Terms .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.8 Structure of Thesis .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 Music Education in Schools.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.2.1 The Value of Music Education .....	12
2.2.2 Music in the Life of Adolescents.....	14
2.2.3 The Purpose of Music Education.....	16
2.2.4 The Benefits of Music Education .....	17
2.2.5 The Place of Music in the Australian Curriculum .....	20
<b>2.3 The Student Choice of Subjects .....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.3.1 Choice of Elective Subjects .....	29
2.3.2 Patterns in Factors Affecting Subject Choice .....	32
<b>2.4 Choosing Music as a Subject .....</b>	<b>39</b>
2.4.1 Theoretical Insights .....	42
2.4.2 Why are Students Participating in Music?.....	43

<b>2.5 Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3 Methodology.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.2 Epistemology .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.3 Research Paradigm .....</b>	<b>49</b>
3.3.1 Qualitative Approach.....	49
3.3.2 Embedded Case Study Design.....	50
<b>3.4 Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>51</b>
3.4.1 Perceptions of Socialisers' Attitudes and Expectations.....	53
3.4.2 Interpretations and Attributions of Past Experiences .....	54
3.4.3 Goals and Self-Definition .....	54
3.4.4 Task-Specific Beliefs.....	55
<b>3.5 Research Questions .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>3.6 Research Procedures.....</b>	<b>56</b>
3.6.1 Ethical Considerations .....	57
3.6.2 Informed Consent .....	57
3.6.3 Minimisation of Risk .....	57
3.6.4 Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Information.....	58
3.6.5 Site Selection, Purposeful Sampling and Participant Recruitment.....	58
3.2.5 Role of the Researcher .....	65
<b>3.3 Data Collection .....</b>	<b>66</b>
3.3.2 Site Visits .....	67
3.3.3 Primary Data Sources .....	69
3.3.4 Secondary Data Sources .....	72
<b>3.4 Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>77</b>
3.4.1 Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis .....	77
3.4.2 Phase 2: Data Compilation and Vignette Creation .....	82
3.4.3 Phase 3: Cross-Case Analysis.....	84
<b>3.6 Credibility and Reliability .....</b>	<b>86</b>
3.6.1 Sustained Field Engagement .....	87
3.6.2 Triangulation .....	87
3.6.3 Thick, Rich Description.....	88
3.6.4 Member Checking .....	88
<b>3.7 Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>4 Case Vignettes .....</b>	<b>90</b>

<b>4.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>90</b>
4.1.1 Summary of Participants .....	90
<b>4.2 Vignette Summaries .....</b>	<b>92</b>
4.2.1 Annie (Year 8) .....	92
4.2.2 Carly (Year 8) .....	93
4.2.3 Jasmine (Year 8) .....	95
4.2.4 Alice (Year 9) .....	96
4.2.5 Avery (Year 9) .....	98
4.2.6 Holly (Year 9) .....	100
4.2.7 James (Year 9) .....	103
4.2.8 Liam (Year 9) .....	104
4.2.9 Max (Year 9) .....	106
4.2.10 Dean (Year 11) .....	110
4.2.11 Grace (Year 11) .....	113
4.2.12 Isiah (Year 11) .....	117
4.2.13 Jenna (Year 11) .....	120
4.2.14 Mira (Year 11) .....	126
<b>4.3 Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>5 Emergent Themes .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>5.2 Teachers .....</b>	<b>130</b>
5.2.1 Teacher Likability and Personality .....	130
5.2.2 Classroom Environment and Management .....	133
5.2.3 Common Understanding ('same page') .....	137
<b>5.3 Peers .....</b>	<b>141</b>
5.3.1 Social Atmosphere .....	141
5.3.2 Influence of Peers .....	145
5.3.3 Friends Don't Participate Unless Personally Enjoyed, Interested and/or Relevant .....	146
5.3.4 Creative, Not Musical Friends .....	147
<b>5.4 Interest .....</b>	<b>147</b>
5.4.1 Personal Factors and Characteristics .....	147
5.4.2 Thoughts, Perceptions and Beliefs .....	152
5.4.3 Personal Musical Involvement .....	154
5.4.4 Relationship Between Music and Sport .....	157
5.4.5 Outside Activities .....	158
5.4.6 Primary/Secondary Previous Experience and Relationship .....	159



<b>5.5 Challenge</b>	<b>161</b>
5.5.1 Self-Concept in Music	162
5.4.2 Perception of Difficulty	163
5.4.3 Mediators of Difficulty	166
<b>5.6 Enjoyment</b>	<b>170</b>
5.6.1 Emotions Associated with Music Involvement	171
5.6.2 Enjoyment of Music Aspects	173
5.6.3 Influence on Enjoyment	175
5.6.4 Reasons for Enjoyment	176
5.6.5 Enjoyment and Choice	179
5.6.6 Enjoyment and Achievement	181
<b>5.7 Engagement</b>	<b>181</b>
5.7.1 Engagement Actions and Indicators	181
5.7.2 Engagement Mediators and Influences	186
5.7.3 Personal Factors Affecting Engagement	189
<b>5.8 Future Relevance</b>	<b>190</b>
5.8.1 Perception of Significance	191
5.8.2 Career Aspirations	194
5.8.3 Personal Factors	197
<b>5.9 Chapter Summary</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>6 Cross-Case Analysis</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>6.2 Inductive Analysis – Participant Choices related to Music Education</b>	<b>200</b>
6.2.1 External Factors	201
6.2.2 Personal Factors	204
6.2.3 Future Relevance	207
6.2.4 Overall Continued Choice	209
<b>6.3 Deductive Analysis – GMAC and Participant Choices Related to Music Education</b>	<b>211</b>
6.3.1 Perception of Socialisers’ Attitudes and Expectations	212
6.3.2 Interpretations and Attributions of Past Experience	216
6.3.3 Goals and Self-Definition	221
6.3.4 Student Task-Specific Beliefs	226
<b>6.4 Chapter Summary</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>7 Discussion</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>7.1 Introduction</b>	<b>233</b>

7.1.1 Why do Students Choose to Study Music in Secondary School? .....	234
7.1.2 What Reasons do Students Give for Choosing to Study Music as a Subject within the Context of NSW Australian Secondary Schooling? .....	239
7.1.3 What Factors Influence Students' Decisions about Commencing and Continuing to Study Music? .....	241
7.1.4 How do these Factors Interact to Shape Students' Choices to Study Music? .....	258
<b>7.2 Implications for the Application of Eccles' Theory .....</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>7.3 Limitations of the Study .....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>7.4 Future Research Opportunities .....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>7.5 Final Notes .....</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>8 References .....</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>9 Appendices .....</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>APPENDIX A – Integrated Research Management Application (IRMA) Ethics Approval Certificate from the University of Wollongong .....</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>APPENDIX B – State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) Ethics Approval Certificate from the New South Wales Department of Education .....</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>APPENDIX C – Whole Class Information Sheets and Consent Forms .....</b>	<b>292</b>
APPENDIX C.a – Whole Class Information Sheet .....	292
APPENDIX C.b – Whole Class Consent Form .....	293
<b>APPENDIX D – Individual Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms .....</b>	<b>294</b>
APPENDIX D.a – Individual Participant Information Sheet .....	294
APPENDIX D.b – Individual Participant Consent Form .....	295
<b>APPENDIX E – Letter to the Principal .....</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>APPENDIX F – Teacher Information Sheet and Consent Form .....</b>	<b>297</b>
APPENDIX F.a – Teacher Information Sheet .....	297
APPENDIX F.b – Teacher Consent Form .....	298
<b>APPENDIX G – Semi-Structured Interview Protocols .....</b>	<b>299</b>
APPENDIX G.a – Student Semi-Structured Interview Protocol .....	299
APPENDIX G.b – Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Protocol .....	300
<b>APPENDIX H – Observation Protocol .....</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>APPENDIX I – NVIVO Case Classifications and Descriptions Document .....</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>APPENDIX J – NVIVO Interview Codes and Descriptions Document .....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>APPENDIX K – NVIVO Survey Codes and Descriptions Document .....</b>	<b>311</b>

<b>APPENDIX L – Qualitative Thematic Analysis Document .....</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>APPENDIX M - Heat Map Tables.....</b>	<b>335</b>
APPENDIX M.a - Strength of Influence of Engagement Behaviours (Personal and External Factors) on Choice and Engagement in Music Education .....	335
APPENDIX M.b - Strength of Influence of Engagement Behaviours (Personal and External Factors) on Choices related to Music Education .....	336
APPENDIX M.c - Strength of Influence of Engagement Behaviours (Personal and External Factors) on Engagement in Music Education .....	337

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

As individuals, we are regularly exposed to music in our lives; whether on the radio, our personal listening devices or as ambient noise in our day-to-day activities. We *hear* music. We try to *understand* the emotions and feeling behind music. We want to *imitate* musicians and play their songs ourselves. We set goals of learning to *play* instruments and attend performances of friends to show our support. Humans are intrinsically tied to music as a means of communicating and connecting with one another. Luckily enough, music has been included in the curriculums of education systems globally which acknowledges its inherent significance to the way we learn to understand the world and communicate with one another. But studies have consistently demonstrated that students are not choosing to continue their Music education at school, particularly at important transition points such as when choosing electives and for senior secondary education.

This study investigates the phenomenon of the student choice of Music education at one NSW secondary school, to understand the variables that influence these decisions. The aim of the study was to consider the range of factors that affect student subject choice particularly related to music education, by using Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) to explore theoretical connections between factors. This chapter will first present the background and significance underpinning the study, and outline the research problem, questions and strategy that guided the investigation. Following this, a discussion of the scope and limitations of the study, as well as a definition of related terms are provided before concluding with an outline of the thesis structure.

## 1.2 Background to the Study

Music is a dynamic concept, encompassing a wide range of definitions globally, which can be summarised by Merriam's (1964) triadic perspective developed from the study of ethnomusicology. This describes music as;

1. A system of sounds
2. A group of ideas and concepts; (and)
3. A human activity.

This definition highlights the multifaceted nature of music, and the highly complex task that learning therefore presents. Previous studies have demonstrated the significant role music plays in helping individuals understand, communicate and navigate their world which is of particular importance in adolescence (McFerran, 2011; Miranda, 2013; North et al., 2000; North & Hargreaves, 1999; Nuttall, 2008; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). During this time, individuals are adjusting to new environments, peers and emotions as they progress develop skills and knowledge they will need for adulthood and success in the working 21<sup>st</sup> century society. While Music may not be a foundational component of career success as in the case of literacy and numeracy skills, its inherent position within the fabric of everyday life in social activities, entertainment and relaxation is paramount (McFerran, 2011; Merriam, 1964; Miranda, 2013).

Despite the significant role of music within day-to-day activities, studies have demonstrated issues with the retention of students in school-based Music education, which has stayed consistently low over time (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Neel, 2015; Warton, 1997; Waters et al., 2014). Globally and within Australia, the vast majority of students are simply not choosing Music as a subject to study beyond compulsory years. In the Australian primary school curriculum, Music is included as one of four mandatory strands of the Creative Arts syllabus (Board of Studies, 2006). Generalist teachers are mainly responsible for designing these experiences for students but have identified a lack of confidence, professional development opportunities and resourcing allocations as barriers preventing a consistent, effective approach to Music education (Capaldo et al., 2014; Goodson et al., 2015; Mills, 1989; Russell-Bowie, 1993, 2009, 2010, 2013). In the NSW Australian secondary school curriculum, Music is positioned as a mandatory subject until the end of Year 8 (Board of Studies, 2003). At this time, Music undergoes a shift in delivery to an elective subject for the latter half of secondary school, requiring the specific student choice to continue their study. It is during the transition points in which students are offered Music as a choice amongst other subjects that observable decreases in student enrolment become apparent, with an average of 7% of students remaining in senior Music classes from the Year 8 mandatory cohort (Board of Studies, 2020). This could be a result of elective Music classes being comprised of self-defined 'talented' or 'capable' students while their less confident or disinterested peers chose other subjects for elective study (Dekaney & Robinson, 2014). During the changeover between the compulsory and elective curricula, Music retains an average of 15% of students while just over half remain between the

elective and senior Higher School Certificate (HSC) transition (Board of Studies, 2020). Within the two years of HSC study in Years 11 and 12, students are again allowed to change subjects if necessary, although retention rates are much higher at around 79% of Year 11 students completing their Year 12 HSC Music examinations (Board of Studies, 2020). While the retention rates within this small cohort may be promising, the overall decrease in Music student population and the reasons for such remain relatively unknown.

This study has sought to identify the factors influencing the student choice of Music education within Australian secondary schools. During this time, students must make the decision whether to continue with Music as an elective subject in Years 9 and 10, or drop out in favour of choosing other subjects. This is the first-time students are offered the choice to design their study pathways, with previous studies identifying a range of factors that influence student choice including **adult stakeholders** such as teachers and parents (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Sankır & Sankır, 2019), **industry expectations** (Arnoux et al., 2009), **satisfaction of psychological needs** (Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Freer & Evans, 2018, 2019; Waters et al., 2014) and **future aspirations** (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Bennett et al., 2013; Harvey, 1984). Studies concerned with student subject choice have adopted motivational theory frameworks to explain the interplay between factors and how these impact engagement in tasks and subjects. Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy-Value Theory, and the more specific extensions made by Eccles and colleagues into the educational context within the General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) has been a popular choice amongst researchers due to its appreciation of a network of influences on the choices, persistence and performance of students (Ball et al., 2016; Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Hill & O'Dell, 2014). The GMAC proposes that choice and persistence within a subject is directly influenced by the perception of others' expectations, past experiences, personal goals and self-definition, and task-specific beliefs, demonstrating a network of factors at play. While this model has been successfully applied in quantitative and mixed-method studies to explain choice behaviours related to science, sport and mathematics, an extension into the Creative Arts domain is yet to be made (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000).

Further research is required to investigate the range of influences and factors at play which effect the retention of Music students. Previous studies into the Australian context of Music

education have been concerned with teacher perceptions of the learning environment, student engagement and implementation barriers, with relatively little investigation into actual student perceptions and choices from a qualitative standpoint. What is known about the student experience of Music comes from studies into the American middle and high school systems, whose structure not only differs greatly to the type of education provided to Australian students, but is also guided by its own unique curriculum and associated requirements. McPherson and colleagues' quantitative investigations into the student motivation to study Music both globally and within VIC, Australia emphasised the significance of Eccles' theory in understanding the choice of Music as a subject but called for further study into the nuances behind these decisions (McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010).

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study stems from the value and significant role Music education plays in the lives of students both in and out of school to develop a specialised range of skills and knowledge. Early exposure during childhood creates a strong basis from which to establish interest, develop identity and foster enjoyment of Music early in life (Ball et al., 2016; Eccles, 1983). Research into brain development related to Music has shown those exposed early in childhood have greater cortical activity and synaptic communication than their less-experienced counterparts, which have consequential effects on learning and skill enhancement in a range of disciplines (Strickland, 2002). This continues into secondary school, with musical training showing the potential to enhance neurodevelopment, improve auditory skills, language, verbal memory, phonological skills and speech-in-noise perception (Cohen, 2009; Rogenmoser et al., 2018; Sachs et al., 2015; Strickland, 2002; Vuilleumier & Trost, 2015).

Music has also been shown to support mood regulation, self-expression and identity formation in adolescents, as it provides a vehicle to connect and communicate in academic and non-academic contexts (McFerran, 2011; Miranda, 2013; North et al., 2000; North & Hargreaves, 1999; Nuttall, 2008; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). Furthermore, research has demonstrated the capacity of Music education to improve the engagement and motivation of students more generally at school (Chadwick & Rurrambu, 2004; Crawford, 2019; Marsh, 2012; Power, 2008). Studies have shown Music's power to re-engage students in the classroom, explore culture and connect students together who may not have necessarily interacted with one another otherwise (Chadwick & Rurrambu, 2004; Crawford, 2019; Marsh, 2012). Research has also

demonstrated the small number of students who actually choose to be involved in Music education beyond the compulsory curriculum, calling into question how and why students make these decisions (Albert, 2006; Baker, 2009; Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Conway et al., 2010; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Hartley, 2009; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Neel, 2015; Rodeiro, 2007). This causes researchers to wonder who is involved and receiving the benefits of a Music education, who is choosing alternative subjects and why these decisions are made.

This study adds important qualitative detail to the literature field regarding the student choice of Music as a subject within Australian secondary schools. The findings of this investigation suggest the significant factors that influence subject choice and expand the knowledge of how students make choices to engage and continue with subjects at school. Insights are offered into the relationships that exist between identified factors, and how this impacts both the choice and persistence within subjects. It also provides contextual information about the choices that are available for students throughout their study of Music in NSW Australian secondary schools to understand the learning pathways that could be chosen. Finally, this research offers evidence of how the GMAC can be applied to understanding the choice of Music education by students, extending this theory into the Creative Arts domain.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

This study was founded by an aim to understand the student choice of Music education during secondary school in Australia. The research questions were developed to explore this phenomenon in greater detail, and contribute to the limited literature field relating to how and why students choose Music as a subject. There was one overarching research question that guided this study, with three sub-questions to explore the context more deeply.

### **Overarching Research Question:**

#### **Why do students choose to study Music in secondary school?**

The overarching research question was concerned with the justification students offered for their choice to study Music as a subject, within the specific context of a NSW public secondary school. In answering this question, the findings from this study can extend current understandings about the ways students make choices about Music education in secondary school.



## **Research Sub-Questions:**

### **Within the context of NSW Australian secondary schooling:**

#### **1. What reasons do students give for choosing to study Music as a subject?**

The first research sub-question was posed to understand the reasons that students offer for choosing Music as a subject to study at secondary school in NSW, Australia. Findings will help provide insight into individual explanations for the choice of Music as a subject, and the patterns that existed between participants in this study. This will give detail to the literature field about the contemporary reasons students choose to engage with Music education.

#### **2. What factors influence students' decisions about commencing and continuing to study Music?**

The second research sub-question sought to identify the factors that impacted the individual choice to become involved in and remain involved in Music as a subject in secondary school. Findings from this study explore the factors discussed by participants that influenced their choice to engage with Music education, and to continue their study into subsequent years. This will give further research insight into the influences on the initial choice of Music as a subject and impacts on their later choices to persist with study.

#### **3. How do these factors interact to shape students' choices to study Music?**

The third research sub-question aimed to provide insight into the relationships that existed between identified factors in Q2 to ultimately influence the choice of Music as a subject in secondary school. Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework will help answer this question as it provides theoretical connections between factors that influence the choice, persistence and achievement of students in different tasks and subjects.

## **1.5 Research Strategy**

A qualitative research methodology using an embedded case study design was selected for the purposes of this investigation into the student choice of Music education in Australian secondary schools. The constructivist epistemology supported the research to develop first-hand insights from those involved within a specific context, allowing readers to draw naturalistic generalisations for further applications (Flick, 2014; Fox, 2010; Given, 2016). This

study aimed to understand the range of influencing factors on student choice, particularly in regard to Music as a subject which required thick, rich descriptions of individual participant experiences to provide insight. Selecting a case study approach for this study allowed for in-depth description and analysis of the phenomenon of choice within real-life contexts, where the relationship between factors remains unknown (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). More specifically, an embedded case study focuses on a single case which is representative of the phenomena of interest, while taking into account multiple subsets which offer unique variations within the case but share the same bounding context (Yin, 2009). For this reason, embedded case studies can be confused with multiple case studies as both are interested in a range of perspectives, with embedded studies sharing the same context and binding variables (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009).

This study also used Eccles (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) as a framework to design data collection protocols, and to analyse findings. Although other sociological and social psychological models exist that also explore the engagement motivations of students, the GMAC was selected for its utility across a wide range of influencing factors and use in previous studies to investigate similar phenomenon. Previous studies concerned with student subject choice have used Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework as a way to analyse student motivation to choose different school subjects, with its adaptations on Atkinson's (1957) EVT into the educational context (Ball et al., 2016; Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Hill & O'Dell, 2014; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000). This model seeks to explain the network of cognitive and psychological factors that affect how students choose subjects and tasks, why they persist, and how they perform (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000). While this model has been successfully applied to explain achievement behaviours in science, sport and mathematics, an extension to the creative arts domain is yet to be made (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000).

One NSW Australian secondary school, Chestnut High School, was selected as the study site, with three classes identified as subsets from which participant cases were identified. These class subsets shared the same context of the school site and were taken by the same Music teacher, Mrs Maple, but differed in their level of instruction and the choices required by students during each year. As NSW Australian secondary schools span Stages 4, 5 and 6, one

subset was chosen from each Stage to represent the full range of student experiences with the Music curriculum. All subsets shared the same teacher, Mrs Maple who was one of two Music education specialists at Chestnut High School. A Stage 4, Year 8 class was identified as the first subset, to gather data about the mandatory student experience of Music in early secondary school, and how this influences the decisions made towards elective subjects. A Stage 5, Year 9 class was selected as the second subset as students will have chosen Music as an elective for study and will need to consider their future choices towards continuing with the subject. A Stage 6, Year 11 class was identified as the third and final subset, as students must make the choice to enter and then decide whether to persist in the following year towards their Higher School Certificate (HSC). These students are also able to consider their involvement beyond school, as they make choices about their aspirations and study pathways after school. From the Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 subsets identified for the study, 14 participants were selected to gather a range of different perspectives on, approaches to and experiences of Music education. Three (3) participants from Year 8, six (6) participants from Year 9 and five (5) participants from Year 11 were purposefully sampled within their larger subsets as representative of the various choices, histories and experiences with Music.

Data collection occurred over three phases, during a 9-month sustained field engagement spanning Terms 1, 2 and 3 of the 2018 Australian school calendar year. Primary data sources included two 30minute semi-structured interviews with each participant to gain insight into their experience of Music, and a mini-survey form to clarify their choices towards studying Music as a subject. The semi-structured interview protocol was designed using Eccles' (1983) GMAC to explore the previous experiences, family context, goals and self-definition, and task-specific beliefs that influenced their involvement in Music. Secondary data sources included observations of each scheduled Music class throughout the research engagement, and the collection of relevant documents to understand the activities and experiences participants were involved in. Approximately 160 classes were observed during data collection phases 2 and 3, with formal notation occurring on 20 different occasions. Documents such as assessment notifications, worksheets and repertoire samples were also used as secondary sources to help provide context to the student experience.

The first phase of data collection was designated as a period of relationship establishment, in which the researcher developed familiarity and connections with each subset and the teacher

by attending scheduled classes, allowing for more authentic subsequent data collection. The second phase involved conducting the initial 30-minute interview with each participant, observing Music classes and collecting relevant learning documents. The third and final phase of data collection gathered follow-up interview data, further observations and documents, and administered a mini-survey to clarify participants' choices related to Music.

Data analysis occurred in three phases to allow themes to first emerge from preliminary analysis, before comparing individual experiences of participants to understand the nuances behind factors that influence the student choice of Music as a subject. The first phase involved preliminary analysis of all data sources to identify emerging themes regarding student choice. The second phase consolidated sources used in preliminary analysis into individual participant vignettes, using the emergent themes from the first phase as category subheadings. The third phase of cross-case analysis then used participant vignettes and the emergent themes to investigate patterns between cases, before comparing findings with Eccles; (1983) GMAC framework to examine for connections.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

To understand the influences on the student choice of Music as a subject, one secondary school site was selected within NSW, Australia, with data collected over three school terms during one school year (2018). As students make decisions about their subjects throughout their engagement in school during the year, a snapshot can be developed of their experiences and choices directly before and after subject selection. Participants from three different year groups, representing the range of students involved in Music education and their various points of choice during secondary school, were included in the study. Eccles' GMAC framework was adopted for its usefulness and application in previous studies to understand the variables affecting the academic choices of students. This framework informed the design of the interview questions, as well as understanding how emerging themes related to one another.

Given the small number of cases, limited to a single site and collected over a single year, broad generalisations cannot be made from the findings of this study. This is due to the nature of qualitative research which develops deep insights into a smaller scope of participants than able to with quantitative research methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2015; Flick, 2014). It is hoped that the thick, rich description used for each participant case, along with the

emergent themes and comparisons with the theoretical framework offered by the data analysis, will allow the reader to draw naturalistic generalisations. The limitations presented by the study's context, methodological approach, design and implementation are acknowledged and taken into consideration throughout this thesis wherever possible. A full discussion of limitations from this study are offered in Chapter 5.

## 1.7 Definition of Terms

**Music** – a capitalised term, used where referring to the subject of Music, as it is taught to students. This may include experiences at school, in instrumental lessons or discussions of the subject within the curriculum.

**music** – a lower-case term, used where referring to the leisure activity of participating in music. This may include incidental listening experiences or opportunities to attend performances.

**Adolescence/nts** – a term used to describe the period of human development between childhood and adulthood, broadly spanning the ages of 10 and 24 (Sawyer et al., 2018). It is a time in which individuals gather information and skills needed for their later lives by actively shaping their environments and exercising their role as a decision-maker (Sawyer et al., 2018). For the purposes of this study, the scope of the adolescents involved will range between 13 and 18 years of age, as included in Australian secondary education systems. Many non-mutually exclusive terms exist for the same developmental period with overlapping definitions used to describe these individuals as youth, teenagers, juveniles and children (Sawyer et al., 2018). Each term carries its own meaning and connotations, and their use must be carefully considered as a result. This study adopts the term 'adolescents' to refer to the developmental period of student participants as it acknowledges a need during this phase to gain necessary skills and knowledge to transition to later phases of life (Sawyer et al., 2018).

**Secondary school** – a term used to refer to the portion of an individual's education that comes after primary school. Secondary school in Australia spans three stages over Year 7 to Year 12 grades, with curriculum implemented by specialist teachers for each subject. While the term 'high school' can also be used to refer to this period, in some global contexts only the more senior Years 10, 11 and 12 are included (Dekaney & Robinson, 2014; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010). For this reason, the encompassing 'secondary' term has been used throughout to refer

to the educational period of students within the literature and study. The only exception to this is where the names of specific schools have been included; pseudonyms have been created, followed by the term ‘High School’ to maintain the original format of the name and distinguish between other generalised mentions of the secondary school context.

**‘prac’ experiences** – a term used by participants to refer to practical Music lessons, usually involving activities that require students to play and practice instruments. The allocation of these lessons within the fortnightly timetable is at the direction of the individual teacher, and are distinct from experiences within ensembles, bands, choirs or extra-curricular instrumental lessons.

## **1.8 Structure of Thesis**

This thesis contains seven chapters. This chapter provided an outline of the problem studied, giving an overview of the background, significance, scope and limitations for the investigation. A brief introduction to the research strategy and questions that guided this study, along with a definition of key terms was also presented. Chapter 2 reviews and critically analyses the literature related to the provision and purpose of Music education in schools, and the student choice of Music as a subject. Chapter 3 summarises the epistemology, theoretical frameworks, and the embedded case study design used within the study. The description of research procedures includes contextual information about the site and participants involved, collection instruments and phases of analysis. The chapter also discusses the ethical considerations, and credibility practices adopted for the investigation. Chapter 4 presents summarised versions of individual vignettes created for the study, to develop the participant voice within the dataset. Chapter 5 then outlines the themes emerging from data analysis, before Chapter 6 presents a cross-case analysis of themes between participants, and with the theoretical framework used for the study. Concluding the thesis, Chapter 7 discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions, literature field and theoretical framework. The chapter also identifies the limitations of the study and areas for future research before some final notes. All supporting documents referred to have been included as appendices at the end of this thesis.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to the student choice of Music education in Australian secondary schools. The review considers the position Music education occupies in schools and the curriculum, as well as student choices made regarding subject selection. To do so, this chapter is comprised of three main sections, each analysing literature related to understanding the context of Music education and how students make subject choices. The first section discusses Music education in schools, and the value, purpose and benefits that are related. It also presents the place of Music within the curriculum, and how students progress through the subject with different points of choice highlighted. The second section analyses how students make choices about the subjects they want to study, highlighting contexts and theories used in other studies to investigate this phenomenon. The last section discusses literature related to the specific choice of Music as a subject to identify what is already known, and the range of influencing factors emerging in other studies. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings from the review of literature presented, identifying the contributions to be made by this study in understanding the student choice of Music education in Australian secondary schools.

### **2.2 Music Education in Schools**

Music education has long been included in the general schedule of compulsory subjects, although much debate still surrounds its purpose, value and place within schools. This debate can be traced back to the changing pressures being placed on schools to create contributing members to 21<sup>st</sup> century societies, which often require skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) and languages to be successful and competitive in the workplace (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Bennett et al., 2013; Naugah et al., 2020). The increased focus on these subjects within schools, reflected in the heavy stress placed on standardised testing in numeracy and literacy, often leads other domains such as the Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) to be neglected.

#### ***2.2.1 The Value of Music Education***

The value of Music education lies in its unique position as both an in-school subject, and wider leisure activity beyond the boundaries of school (Board of Studies, 2006; Cohen, 2009; Lonie & Dickens, 2016; McFerran, 2011; Rogenmoser et al., 2018; Tobias, 2015). Accordingly, there

are two main types of musical exposure individuals can experience; that which is provided within a school context, and that which is not (Lonie & Dickens, 2016; Tobias, 2015). Both types of exposure provide individuals with the opportunity to learn musical content, although the quality, depth and breadth of the experiences will differ depending on the confidence of the teacher, and the context of the lesson (Capaldo et al., 2014; Goodson et al., 2015; Russell-Bowie, 2010, 2013; Swanwick & Lawson, 1999). With the contemporary focus on STEM skills, numeracy and literacy raises concerns about the value of creative arts, and particularly Music that is being presented to students in schools.

As music is one of the most widespread leisure activities, researchers have been interested in the long-term value engagement can have for brain health and development (Cohen, 2009; Guido, 2014; McFerran, 2011; Nuttall, 2008; Rogenmoser et al., 2018; Strickland, 2002). Involvement is often sparked or inspired in childhood, which continues through life to support not only musical understanding but the development of skills and capabilities which can transfer to other disciplines. However, researchers have shown that general involvement and an intention to continue music as a hobby could be more beneficial for individuals than pursuing specific careers (Rogenmoser et al., 2018). One study compared three groups with differing exposures to music; professionals, amateurs and non-musicians (Rogenmoser et al., 2018). Examination of their brain age revealed musicians had lower scores than non-musicians, with amateurs testing lowest of all, indicating a brain decelerating age effect from musical involvement. This was due to the large investments of effort, time and other costs required which developed and maintained their musical engagement, as well as experiencing positive feedback and rewards through support and achievement. The challenges provided by musical activities modulated and enhanced synaptic connections, increase neural activity and cerebral blood-flow and the metabolism which enhances biological processes. This results in microstructural changes to the grey and white matter of the brain, developing density of the connections and synaptic pathways. These were theorised to develop 'brain reserves' which help prevent against age-related cognitive decline. The brains of amateur musicians were shown youngest of all, due to their involvement in numerous challenging activities rather than their professional focus on one alone.



Therefore, it could be said that it is more important to establish some level of musical involvement to develop a sense of value for Music early on, rather than push students into specific Music-industry professions or career pathways. This means that it is not significant for every student to be a professional musician, or to want to follow musical occupations and aspirations (Rogenmoser et al., 2018). Instead, it is important to support student understanding and a want to continue as a hobby and life-skill to allow for the cognitive development and brain-protecting affect to take place (Rogenmoser et al., 2018). This is particularly important in 21<sup>st</sup> century life with our rapidly aging and deteriorating population. For this reason, research has further demonstrated the significant value Music has in 21<sup>st</sup> century life and society as not only an enjoyable activity, but a protective factor against aging.

In sum, the value of Music education is often questioned, with teaching curriculum taking a greater focus on STEM-subjects needed for supposed success in 21<sup>st</sup> century society. However, research has suggested the significant role that being involved in Music can have in helping individuals adapt and prepare themselves for their futures. This indicates a need for evidence to support the better understanding of how this value connected to the study of Music is connected with the student choice to pursue the subject in school.

### ***2.2.2 Music in the Life of Adolescents***

Adolescence is a time in which music takes a significant developmental role, as individuals begin to navigate the transition between child- and adulthood (Miranda, 2013). The adolescent process of engaging with musical activities can be described in one of two ways; as a mirror or as a stage (McFerran, 2011). Individuals can utilise their listening preferences, instrumental skills and performance abilities as a mirror to view and construct their self-image. This enables a more developed self-understanding and allows for modification and redefinition over time (McFerran, 2011). Alternatively, music can be used as a stage for the individual to be seen by others, as a way of connecting and communicating with like-minded peers. In this way, adolescents can show-off their talents and interact with others who have similar skills, allowing for growth, development and self-realisation in ways previously unimaginable (McFerran, 2011). In both approaches, music is used as a therapeutic tool to support the modification of behaviours and emotions, particularly in the adolescent period when these are unstable and still developing.

Research emphasises the significance of music to the daily lives and activities of adolescents, used as a mood regulation tool as well as means of self-expression and identification (Miranda, 2013; North et al., 2000; North & Hargreaves, 1999; Nuttall, 2008; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Taylor & Paperte, 1958). Musical activities were found to manage subjective (intensity, clarity), physiologic (movement, energy levels, 'chill' sensation) and behavioural (emotional expression, calm) aspects of an individual's mood, as long as the activity was voluntary and suited to the current mood of the individual (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). The sensory effect of music on adolescents could therefore be described as overwhelming, and particularly necessary during a phase in an adolescent's lives where they are developing ideas about themselves, others and how to connect with the world.

Analysis of student submissions to an American national essay contest on the significance of music in their lives revealed a nuanced relationship, encompassing identity formation, impressions of programs and teachers, and the emotional, life and social benefits it provides (Campbell et al., 2007). Meaning was ascribed to their experience as students explored their personal capacities and capabilities, developing skills and understandings that were not necessarily academic in nature. Responses also indicated positive and negative impressions of teachers and programs which influenced the ways individuals perceived music and their continued involvement. The researchers stressed the significant place music occupies in the adolescent experience, offering the unique opportunity of 'being' inside and outside of the classroom environment (Campbell et al., 2007).

Overall, music is a significant tool used by adolescents to regulate their mood, help express themselves and navigate their emerging sense of identity (Campbell et al., 2007; McFerran, 2011; Miranda, 2013; Nuttall, 2008; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). By using music as a mirror to view and construct their self-image, or as a stage to be seen and communicate with likeminded peers (McFerran, 2011), adolescents develop a nuanced relationship with music and the role it occupies in their lives. This extends beyond the mere skills and knowledge that are acquired through musical study, with students emphasising the unique feelings associated with involvement as well as the experience of 'being' (Campbell et al., 2007; Miranda, 2013; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

### *2.2.3 The Purpose of Music Education*

The justification for the structure and design of Music within the Australian curriculum is underpinned by two main philosophies which describe the purpose of the education as either extrinsic or intrinsic. Both seek to justify the design and place of Music programs in primary and secondary schooling environments, attributing significance to either the utility value (extrinsic) or inherent value (intrinsic) that having musical skills and knowledge can bring (Temmerman, 1991). Historically, pedagogy has viewed these purposes as two separate arguments, rather than as dichotomies which could be used in tandem to view the range of experiences provided to students through their involvement with Music (Temmerman, 1991). Students in contemporary classroom settings discuss the subject of Music as providing skills and knowledge, as well as a certain unique set of ‘feelings’ (Campbell et al., 2007; McFerran, 2011; Miranda, 2013; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). These sentiments can be traced back to extrinsic and intrinsic purposes and arguments set forward in educational philosophies and literature that has justified the inclusion of Music in the compulsory curriculum.

The extrinsic purpose of Music has been the most pervasive and apparent in the general approach to school-based experiences, as it highlights the utilitarian purposes behind its inclusion (Temmerman, 1991). This is most commonly seen when an individual participates in Music because of a specific set of skills or knowledge they can gain, in order to achieve an intended goal such as learning to play a particular piece or instrument, reading music or writing a song. This implies that there is a utility value in what has been learnt in order to apply this understanding to new settings or situations.

The intrinsic purpose of Music education was first proposed by Britton in 1958, which saw inherent value in participating purely for its own sake (Temmerman, 1991). Seen as aesthetic education, the intrinsic perspective valued Music not for its ancillary outcomes, but for the inherent benefit of participating. This was supported by other Music education writers, such as Leonard (1965, 1972), Reimer (1970) and Swanwick (1979, 1988) who saw the importance of education stemming from the inherent value of Music itself. Reimer (1970) believed Music education programs had a dual societal obligation; to foster those who are musically gifted, and develop ‘aesthetic sensitivity’ to music of all people no matter their innate talent, in order to support their perception and response to various qualities of musical expression. Leonard (1965) also emphasised that extrinsic purpose arguments were often used by educators to

convince stakeholders of the place of Music education, as many lacked understanding or their own aesthetic appreciation for the subject.

The extrinsic-intrinsic perspective debate for Music education is often brought up when discussing the value of Music education within schools, the curriculum and to students. Much of the current design and implementation of Music programs in Australian schools find their approaches underpinned by extrinsic philosophies and pedagogies, which focus on performance and musical literacy skills needed to produce tangible learning outcomes that satisfy the needs of the standards-based curriculum. However, music researchers have stressed that focusing on one perspective or the other presents issues for the ongoing life and implementation of the subject. For example, Elliot (1983) called for a shift away from a purely aesthetic pedagogy, whose adoption often resulted in funding concerns and knock-on reductions in creative arts programs and resources. Neither perspective can be viewed completely in isolation, as it is the tension between the extrinsic and intrinsic arguments that creates the space in which Music programs find their justification; both as a subject that imparts specific skills, knowledges and understandings **and** as unique form of self-expression whose purpose is for its own sake.

In summary, the purpose of Music education can be traced back to extrinsic or intrinsic arguments related to its implementation (Elliott, 1983; Myers, 2005; Temmerman, 1991). This is based in either a utility or inherent value for the skills and knowledge related to Music education. However, rather than being based solely in the extrinsic or intrinsic argument, contemporary Music pedagogy researchers argue that the purpose of Music education should lie in the tension between the two (Elliott, 1983; Elliott, 1996; Myers, 2005). In essence, Music should not be taught only for the skills it develops or for its aesthetic value, but for a combination of both.

#### ***2.2.4 The Benefits of Music Education***

The benefits of including Music within an individual's general education has been long been the interest of researchers (Chadwick & Rurrumbu, 2004; Crawford, 2019; Marsh, 2012; Power, 2008). This research highlights the impact on engagement and motivation of students involved, as well as providing alternate forms of learning and participation than that developed in other subject disciplines. As a result, the Music environment has been shown to support a

wide variety of student needs, develop relationships between peers and offer unique opportunities to those involved that would not be accessible in subjects such as mathematics, sciences or languages.

Integrating musical activities into the classroom outside of specific Music lessons have been shown to improve the motivation and engagement of boys in education (Power, 2008). One study compared the experiences of male primary school students from a remote area of the Northern Territory and from a boys' secondary school in New South Wales in regards to their involvement in a program developing multiple literacies. Amongst other activities, students developed their musical intelligence through singing, moving and creating in the authentic, embedded context of project-based learning. By interacting with male role-models in non-traditional settings, the program challenged gender stereotypes while broadening their narrow perceptions of their own and others' identities. This resulted in personal and social growth, which supported the development of alternative forms of practical and aesthetic knowledge. Many students left this program with new understandings of their capabilities and capacities, appreciated untapped talent and were excited to continue their learning. Power (2008) suggests that "for those students, boys among them, whose circumstances make it difficult for them to achieve at school, motivation and engagement can become critical educational outcomes in themselves" (p.86), and highlights the capacity of musical activities to meet these needs.

Benefits of participating in Music programs also extend to those groups who are more marginalised, or newer to the Australian schooling system and culture. A study of a Victorian secondary school with a high percentage of young people from refugee backgrounds discusses the socially inclusive practices adopted by the Music programs, which were shown as supporting student acclimation to their new setting (Crawford, 2019). Music was used as a way to support refugee students through three avenues: personal wellbeing, providing a sense of belonging, and enhancing engagement with learning (Crawford, 2019). Data showed that a Music classroom which embraced socially inclusive practices resulted in a transcultural learning space which allowed for cross-cultural exchanges and negotiations between peers previously unimaginable (Crawford, 2019). This raises questions about the critical role Music education and the arts plays in contemporary school climates, in helping students communicate and feel included by their peers. A similar study into a Sydney-based school-case examined how musical activities contributed to the acculturation and integration process in a specialist

setting for newly arrived immigrant and refugee students (Marsh, 2012). This study investigated the role of Music in their school, home and community lives, which developed opportunities for interpersonal connections, social cohesion and student empowerment. The major outcome was an overall feeling of belonging to their school, and the wider Australian community, with the ability to link to further global music networks through technological media (Marsh, 2012). Again, this presents benefits to students beyond the mere acquisition of musical skills, and speaks to the power of Music programs to inspire new ways of connecting, particularly for newly arrived students.

The benefits of Music education programs have been investigated in rural Indigenous communities in their capacity to help re-engage young people. By creating partnerships with communities to design programs that pay respect to their unique traditions and customs, while being delivered in their native language, Indigenous youth are able to reclaim their cultural identity which is lost in many other educational initiatives that are commonly perceived as ‘helpful’ (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004). The outcome of these culturally-informed, and situationally-developed programs extends far beyond the musical skills developed by students; they establish musical literacy, numerical notation understanding, and structuring and logic skills when song-writing (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004). This in turn leads to increased employment opportunities, and the ability to re-engage ‘lost’ children in providing them a purpose, skill and direction. These Music programs were also able to help students bridge their Indigenous cultural knowledge with contemporary practices, with students explaining that to play a brass instrument, “you play it like a didjeridu” (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004, p.163). Despite not attending formal schooling, the students involved in the program showed highly developed musical skills and deep interests in related understandings. This research was met with calls for support of these programs beyond their immediate delivery, to ensure action is taken after the students’ ‘graduate’ so they can put their skills into practice. Having a purpose behind their actions was seen as one of the driving factors in their continued participation, alongside learning authentic industry skills in context from highly experienced role-models (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004).

In sum, the benefits of Music education show significant impacts on student engagement and motivation. These are evident beyond the boundaries of the normal Music classroom, as well as showing support for refugee and immigrant students in their acculturation and sense of

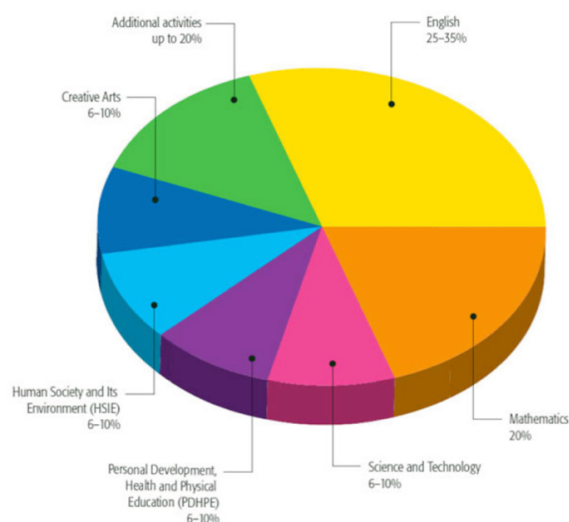
belonging within their school communities. Benefits were also shown for Indigenous students, providing alternative forms of engagement and life-skill development.

### ***2.2.5 The Place of Music in the Australian Curriculum***

Music education occupies an important space in the Australian curriculum as one of five Creative Arts strands available to students throughout their schooling careers. Unlike subjects such as mathematics, sciences and literacy, Music shifts from having mandatory curriculum involvement throughout Early Stage 1 to Stage 4, to allowing elective participation in the Stages 5 and 6 (Board of Studies, 2003, 2006, 2009a, 2009b). This influences the experiences and opportunities students have with Music, impacting their overall perceptions and motivations to continue their study. In NSW, teachers use a state-based version of the Australian National Curriculum thus this review will examine the place and progression of Music within this specific curricula context. Students move through seven stages of learning within the mandated curriculum, beginning with the foundational skills and understandings of Kindergarten, and finishing with the completion of the Higher School Certificate in Year 12. The primary curriculum spans Kindergarten to Year 6, based in six Key Learning Areas (KLAS); English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Creative Arts, Geography and History, (and) Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) (Board of Studies, 2006). The distribution of weekly teaching time that should be afforded to each KLA, as advised by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is shown in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1**

*K-6 Time Allocation Guide for Key Learning Areas in NSW (where 6-10% represents 1.5-2.5hrs in a typical teaching week) (NESA, 2019)*

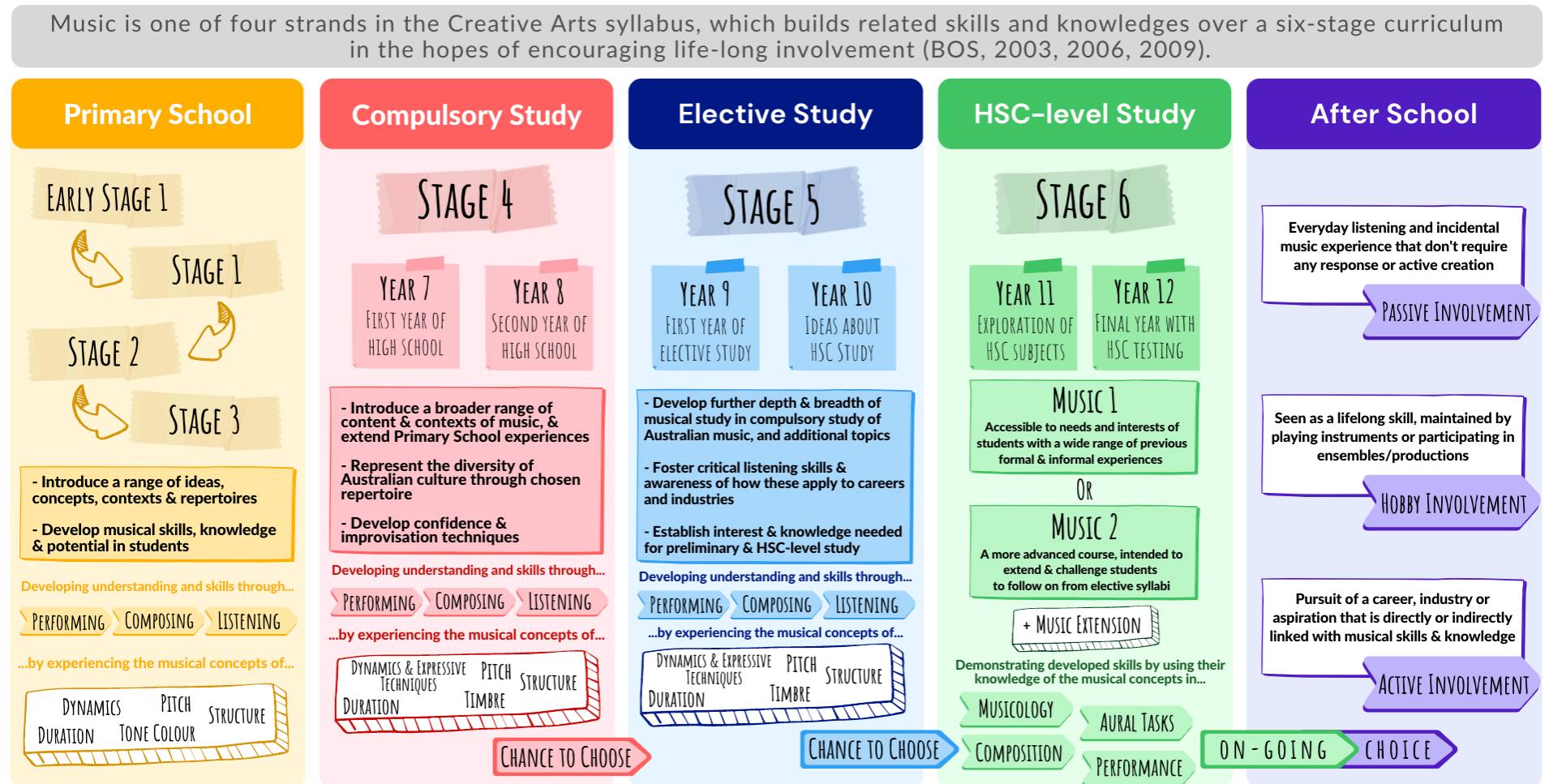


Music is considered part of the general schedule of subjects for most students throughout the start of their schooling careers, as a strand within the Creative Arts curriculum along with Visual Arts, Dance and Drama (Board of Studies, 2006). This designates Music as a compulsory component of schooling until Stage 4 (Years 7 and 8), after which time students can make choices about the subjects they want to take (Board of Studies, 2003). These subjects are more commonly referred to by students as ‘electives’, requiring their selection from a range of options at the end of Stage 4 to study throughout Stage 5. This is a novel component of Years 9 and 10, and is the first opportunity most students will have to actively choose their course of study, finally allowed the freedom and autonomy to participate in subjects that suit their personal learning styles and intentions (Board of Studies, 2003). At the end of Stage 5, students will be asked to choose their subjects for the Stage 6 HSC course of study consisting of at least 12 units in Year 11, and at least 10 units in Year 12 including 2 units of English (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). Four board-developed Music courses are available for study during Stage 6 including Music 1, Music 2, Music Extension and Life Skills Music. The first three courses are designed for mainstream students with increasing levels of challenge, while the Life Skills course has been developed for students with learning disabilities to equip them with accessible skills and knowledge (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). Depending on student interest and available resources and staffing, schools will vary in their offerings to students on subject lists. A summary of the student progression through the Music curriculum is shown in Figure 2.2, followed by a description of the nuances and challenges faced in each Stage.



**Figure 2.2.**

*The Progression of Music Education in New South Wales, within the Curriculum and Beyond*



In primary school, the curriculum is designed to develop musical skills, knowledge and potential in students. This encourages students to be actively involved in creating and responding to music, with teachers playing a critical role in providing experiences that are suited to the abilities and developmental interests of those involved (Board of Studies, 2006). Activities should include performance, listening and composing or organising sound tasks that explore the five concepts of Music;

1. Dynamics (volume),
2. Duration (rhythm),
3. Pitch (melody and harmony),
4. Tone colour (texture and type of sound), and
5. Structure (form and design)

These concepts form the basis for how repertoire is discussed and critically analysed within the music industry, with focus given in each of the subsequent secondary school curriculums to extending this understanding (Board of Studies, 2006). The primary school portion of the curriculum caters for Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) through to Stage 3 (Year 5 and 6), and involves children between the ages of 5 and 12. In public primary schools, students usually receive their Music education from generalist teachers, responsible for teaching all content areas of the curriculum. Research has shown that these generalist teachers lack confidence, professional development opportunities and the expert knowledge required to deliver an effective Music education to all of their students (Bowell, 2010; Hallam et al., 2009; Lowe & Lummins, 2013; Peterson, 2014; Russell-Bowie, 2009, 2010, 2013). Certain schooling circumstances have provisions for specialist teachers such as public schools with additional funding, Catholic environments and independent schools (Kynaston & Kynaston, 2014). In all situations, Music is a mandatory part of the curriculum requiring students to be involved no matter their choice or interest but the foundational experiences in Music provided to students varies greatly between classes and schools (Capaldo et al., 2014; Hallam et al., 2009; Russell-Bowie, 2009, 2010, 2013). This in turn influences the prior experiences and perceptions students have of Music that they bring into secondary school.

Secondary school starts with Stage 4, with students in Years 7 and 8 involved in a mandatory Music curriculum which introduces a broad range of musical contexts and content (Board of Studies, 2003). In the transition to secondary school, Music undergoes a significant change in its delivery. All subjects in secondary school are taught by specialist subject-specific teachers

who have identified expertise and training in a particular content area, as compared to their primary generalist counterparts. The secondary portion of the curriculum also transitions the language used to discuss musical concepts to now include discussions of dynamics and expressive techniques, timbre (or tone colour), structure, pitch and duration. Teachers must plan accessible and engaging lessons for their Stage 4 students in a 100-hr course delivered over two years that accounts for the range of experiences they bring to the classroom, to extend primary school experiences to broaden exposure and develop confidence in their own skills. Students are exposed to a variety of musical content and contexts that reflect the diversity of Australian culture, using repertoire that supports them to broaden, deepen and extend their learning (Board of Studies, 2003). These Stage 4 experiences are fundamental in establishing an individual's perception of the subject, and whether they would want to continue their involvement throughout the rest of secondary school. Towards the end of Stage 4, usually half-way through Year 8, students are offered a list of elective subjects for study in Stage 5 and have to nominate their choices. The range of elective subjects are at the discretion of the school; necessary resources are needed to allow each program to run efficiently which means the elective offerings will differ from school-to-school.

The middle years of secondary school in Australia apply the Stage 5 curriculum, intended for adolescents between 15 and 16 years old. Stage 5 marks the beginning of elective courses of study, with students able to choose subjects that they want to study along with mandatory topics such as English, mathematics, science and physical education. The demands of these elective curricula increase as students progress towards higher levels of study and more specialised skill sets. This requires choice and interest from students to guide their engagement in subjects for the rest of their schooling careers. In some cases, the numbers of students choosing Music as an elective during these higher stages are so small that running the class is not feasible due to resourcing, timetabling or room allocations (Lowe, 2008; Resources, 2016; Temmerman, 1991; Warton, 1997). In most other cases, the student population of these Music classes are significantly less than in other electives offered during the same time such as Cooking, Woodwork, History, Business Studies, and Drama (Lowe, 2008; McEwan, 2013; Ng & Hartwig, 2011). In the Stage 5 Music curriculum, students are exposed to more specific musical contexts in a longer 200-hr course taught across two years that builds on the skills and knowledge gained in Stage 4. Students develop the depth and breadth of their study into a range of repertoire from specified topics, with the compulsory study of 'Australian Music'

complimented by others chosen by the class teacher to match the needs of individuals (Board of Studies, 2003). The curriculum also intends to establish the interest and knowledge needed for subsequent senior study, and encourages continuation into the Stage 6 curriculum.

The last two years of secondary school in NSW build towards students completing their Higher School Certificate (HSC) from their study of the Stage 6 curriculum in Years 11 and 12. For their HSC, students must choose 12 units-worth of subjects in Year 11 and can drop down to at least 10 units in Year 12, as long as they maintain 2 units of English study throughout Stage 6 (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). This means any Music involvement requires direct student choice during these years, with two different pathways to choose from; Music 1 or Music 2. Both have a 120-hr, 2-unit preliminary (Year 11) and HSC (Year 12) course which build on components of the mandatory and elective syllabi from previous stages, however are aimed to attract different groups of students. Music 1 is designed for students to carry on from their elective experiences, or to re-join Music study in their final years of school with a wide variety of interests, backgrounds and experiences catered for within the curriculum. Students can approach Music 1 with beginner level or highly developed skills and experiences, with no assumptions of prior knowledge in notation or musical language beyond that presented in the mandatory Stage 4 course (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). Music 2 extends the skills and knowledge from the additional study components of the elective courses, with a greater focus in Western Art music and traditional musical contexts. This more advanced course assumes a formal music background in students, requiring musical literacy and knowledge of styles and notational language to navigate curriculum requirements (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). From their preliminary involvement in Music 2, students can elect to take on Music Extension for their HSC level study; an additional unit of Music that follows on from the complex demands of Music 2 and assumes a high level of musical literacy and advanced performance, composition and musicology skills (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). The Music 2 and Music Extension courses are only offered at a small number of schools, to meet demands from interested and capable students. Both Music pathways require students to participate in composition, performance, listening and musicology tasks which require core assessments, and allow students to choose additional elective assessment tasks according to their skills and interests. These tasks apply student knowledge of musical concepts in a range of contexts and aims to encourage life-long interest and aspiration potential.

After school, there are three possible pathways for late adolescents to take regarding their continued Music engagement. First, they could only passively engage with Music during incidental day-to-day experiences such as listening on the radio or personal devices or attending performances. Alternatively, individuals could continue music as a hobby or lifelong skill, playing as a form of relaxation or socialisation, or performing with friends in a band, choir or ensemble. Finally, individuals may choose a music-related career that would require their active involvement and application of musical knowledge in a range of different ways, and represents the population of students who persist with Music into higher education. Studies into students choosing Music-related education beyond school reveal challenges in retaining them throughout their degrees, citing difficulties in meeting the expectations of supervisors, insufficient support and financial impacts of studying (de Boise, 2018; González-Moreno, 2012; Joseph, 2015; Parkes & Daniel, 2013).

Research has provided some insights into the current attrition rates of Music students in Australia (Ng & Hartwig, 2011). A study of class and instrumental Music teachers from Queensland gathered insights into how students were making choices about their Music education, and their estimated retention numbers over specific points of transition (Ng & Hartwig, 2011). Using sociocognitive theory to appreciate the influence of contextual and cognitive factors on student choice, teachers were asked to determine the anticipated involvement rate of students during the compulsory-to-elective transition and from the elective-to-final-year study (Ng & Hartwig, 2011). Most predicted around 60% would continue with their instrumental education beyond compulsory level, while only a small number was estimated to continue with classroom programs (Ng & Hartwig, 2011). All participants perceived a declining trend in the percentage of students who would continue with Music as an academic subject, with only small enrolment populations predicted for Years 9 and 11. Teachers were also asked about the factors and reasons that influenced student choice and participation, highlighting justifications for continuation/discontinuation and relationships between social and school-based variables. The most highly-ranked reasons contributing to attrition were the low curriculum status of Music, a perceived unimportance, parental discouragement, lack of interest and peer discouragement (Ng & Hartwig, 2011). Teachers also indicated that high-quality Music programs were associated with student persistence, while a significant negative association was noted between involvement and parental discouragement, parental disaffection and peer influence (Ng & Hartwig, 2011). This speaks to the wide range

of influences on the student choice to continue with Music, as well as external factors that can affect an individual's motivation to continue.

Put simply, students are not choosing Music as an elective subject, or one that they want to continue studying throughout secondary school and into higher education. Despite the self- and research-acknowledged significance of music to adolescents, it remains one of the least selected subjects at school (Campbell et al., 2007; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Miranda, 2013; Nuttall, 2008; Park, 2018). While the number of students completing their HSC has steadily risen over the last 15 years, the enrolment and attrition rates in Music courses have declined, with an average of 7% of the total candidature choosing to be involved (Board of Studies, 2020). The first and most significant decline in student participation in Music occurs between Stage 4 and 5 when given the choice of electives, with an average of 85% choosing alternate subjects. Further reductions occur between Stage 5 and the preliminary phase of Stage 6 at a rate of 44% with an average of 5500 students completing some form of HSC-level Music course (Board of Studies, 2020). Despite this, students achieve at an increasingly high rate, with over half the Music 1 cohort and an average of 98% of Music 2 students receiving a mark of 80 or above for their HSC (Board of Studies, 2020). This results in an average mark of Band 5 for Music students, indicating a high level of achievement for those who remain engaged throughout school (Board of Studies, 2020). Researchers do not yet have a clear picture of why this occurs, or the motivations students have for continuing and discontinuing their formal Music education, with global retention rates of secondary school Music alarmingly low (Albert, 2006; Baker, 2009; Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Conway et al., 2010; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Hartley, 2009; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Neel, 2015; Rodeiro, 2007); as low as 2% in the UK (Bray, 2000), 5% in the US (Walker, 2003) and 3% in Western Australia (Lowe, 2008). This suggests a contemporary need to explore the reasons students choose to engage with Music education, to discover who is actually participating and their motivations for doing so.

In summary, the subject of Music is positioned as one of four strands within the Creative Arts curriculum in Australia, moving from compulsory to elective engagement in Stage 5 (Year 9). During primary school, Music is the responsibility of generalist teachers who also must implement other KLAs which have a greater significance and time allocation recommended in a typical teaching week (Board of Studies, 2006; NESA, 2019). Throughout the secondary

curriculum, students develop their knowledge further about the concepts of music which are demonstrated through performance, aural and composition tasks (Board of Studies, 2003). In secondary school, specialist teachers implement the Music curriculum to all Stage 4 students who are then allowed to choose electives to study in Stage 5 (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). Literature identifies this as the time in which most students choose to disengage from Music education or further study, with attrition rates falling worldwide. This means that generally, students are not choosing to continue their Music education beyond compulsory involvement. However, those that do achieve at an increasingly high rate and continue on with higher motivational profiles and a multifaceted skill set to apply to Music and other disciplines than their peers who do not take Music as a subject.

This section presented a general overview of Music education in schools and the context surrounding its implementation and justification. The significant value of Music education was discussed, including literature related to its importance in the lives of adolescents as a relational, self-regulation and identity-development tool. The extrinsic-intrinsic purpose of Music education was also presented, along with the benefits provided to various student contexts. The section also described how Music is placed within the curriculum and considered the choices that students are presented with in regard to Music Education across secondary school. The next section will shift to discussing how students choose subjects to study in school, and identifies general patterns in variables that affect student decisions.

### **2.3 The Student Choice of Subjects**

Studies have approached the phenomenon of subject choice from a variety of theoretical perspectives in a broad range of contexts to determine what lies at the core of the decision-making process that students engage with (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Lewis et al., 2020; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Park, 2018; Rousseau & Venter, 2009; Warton, 1997). Although differences exist between these investigations, the literature reveals general patterns in how students make choices to engage in or disengage from particular subjects, influenced by external and personal factors. These patterns can be found in studies of the student choice of Music education, although more research is needed to develop understandings of the relationships that exist between factors.

### *2.3.1 Choice of Elective Subjects*

There has been a large amount of international interest surrounding how and why students choose their secondary school subjects, beyond compulsory levels. This includes studies considering a range of educational contexts from around the world:

- **Australia** (Dawson & O'Connor, 1991; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Lowe et al., 2019; McPherson et al., 2015; Rennie & Parker, 1993)
- **Africa** (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011; Reddy et al., 2012)
- **Europe** (Arnoux et al., 2009; Bügel & Buunk, 1996; Juvonen, 2011; Kelly et al., 2012; Portowitz et al., 2010; Renaud & Renaud, 2013; Sankır & Sankır, 2019)
- **The United Kingdom** (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Bennett et al., 2013; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Thomson et al., 2018; Thomson & Gunter, 2006)
- **North and South America** (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Hentschke, 2010; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010), and
- **Asia** (Leung, 2008; Leung & McPherson, 2010; Park, 2018; Seog et al., 2011; Xie & Leung, 2011).

Within this international body of literature, some investigations have focused on the **general choice** of subjects (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Harvey, 1984; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019), while the others focus on one particular discipline to unpack justifications and related reasoning for subject choice. A large portion of this research seems interested in the choice of STEM-based subjects such as

- **Mathematics** (Arnoux et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2012; Lowe et al., 2019; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Reddy et al., 2012)
- **Science** (Bennett et al., 2013; Dawson & O'Connor, 1991; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Park, 2018), and
- **Computer technologies** (Renaud & Renaud, 2013).

Subjects such as **foreign languages** (Bügel & Buunk, 1996), and the **creative arts** (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011; Hamann & Walker, 1993; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Sankır & Sankır, 2019; Thomson et al., 2018) are associated with less research interest, but are reaching similar conclusions in terms of the variables that influence independent choice of subjects. Data from this range of studies into student subject choice have made abundantly clear that the overwhelming majority of students choose not to continue



studying Music beyond the compulsory level, raising questions about how and why students are making choices regarding their schedule of subjects.

A range of motivation theoretical frameworks have been used to investigate the variables that affect student choice, and conceptualise the relationships that exist between them. Some researchers have utilised theories to explain the complex social interactions and teaching practices that exist in classrooms, and postulate that these influence the overall desire to choose particular subjects (Crawford, 2019; Ng & Hartwig, 2011). Other studies have focused on internal cognitive processes, adopting theoretical frameworks such as

- **Flow** (Burak, 2014)
- **Resistance** (Thomson et al., 2018)
- **Self-Determination Theory** (Freer & Evans, 2018; Waters et al., 2014)
- **The motivation and engagement framework** (Power, 2008)

While these studies either focused on external or internal influences on subject choice, a larger group of studies within the literature field used theories that appreciated the network and interactions between external and internal variables. Most of these investigations used Atkinson's **Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT)** to explore the influence of individual expectancies for success, and the value associated with related tasks on overall subject choice (Burak, 2014; Hentschke, 2010; Juvonen, 2011; Leung & McPherson, 2010; Lowe, 2011; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Portowitz et al., 2010; Seog et al., 2011; Waters et al., 2014; Xie & Leung, 2011). Analysis revealed the application of EVT within these studies was able to take into account influences from external stakeholders, contextual factors and personal differences on student subject choice. It can therefore be summarised that the choice of secondary school subjects by students has mainly been examined from a motivation-theory lens, with various studies using related theories of EVT, flow, and self-determination to examine reasoning and relationships between variables.

This body of research has also identified a range of thematic variables that influence the subject-related choices made by students. Individual factors have shown significant impact on the choices of students, as they guide students down various learning pathways based in personal interest and include

- **Gender** (Bügel & Buunk, 1996; Dawson & O'Connor, 1991; de Boise, 2018; Eccles, 1983; Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011; González-Moreno, 2012; Leung, 2008; Park, 2018; Rennie & Parker, 1993)
- **Personality** (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011; Mendolia & Walker, 2014)

External factors were also highlighted as integral mediators in the experience of and choices relating to various subjects, including the influence of

- **Socio-cultural context or socioeconomic status** (Ametller & Ryder, 2015; Arnoux et al., 2009; Burak, 2014; Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004; González-Moreno, 2012; Kelly et al., 2012; Marsh, 2012; McEwan, 2013; Reddy et al., 2012)
- **Teachers** (Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Sankır & Sankır, 2019)
- **Parents** (Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Renaud & Renaud, 2013; Sankır & Sankır, 2019)
- **Achievement** (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011; Lowe et al., 2019); and
- **Career development** (Bennett et al., 2013; Harvey, 1984)

In identifying this range of variables with both external and internal influences, it became clear that the current study would need to use a motivation-based theoretical framework within the study to allow for the emergence and relationship between factors to be made clear. The majority of the literature field has collected quantitative data to generalise and rationalise these patterns, although the qualitative detail from contemporary investigations is needed to further understand student subject choice behaviours.

In summary, the literature field demonstrates international interest in the ways students make decisions regarding their engagement in particular subjects. Analysis of the patterns amongst these studies reveal a large portion dedicated to understanding the student choice of STEM subjects, with only a small number investigating foreign language and Creative Arts subjects. These studies have adopted a range of theoretical frameworks, with a critical review concluding a need to examine student choice using the lens of motivational theories such as Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). Groups of thematic variables were also identified, suggesting the role of both individual and external factors in mediating subject choice.

### ***2.3.2 Patterns in Factors Affecting Subject Choice***

Although varied in contexts and theoretical perspectives, research has revealed patterns in the choice behaviours of students (Ametller & Ryder, 2015; Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Galliot & Graham, 2015; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Park, 2018; Rousseau & Venter, 2009; Waters et al., 2014). Literature agrees that choice is a dynamic process, with factors emerging and evolving over time which influence an individual's decision (Glasser, 1997; Mandler, 2017; Park, 2018). This emphasises a need to analyse the phenomenon of subject choice from a motivation-theory lens in order to understand why and how adolescents are making choices about their current involvement, and the effects on their future engagement.

Each individual has a unique combination of external and individual factors that affect the choices they make, the engagement shown and their persistence regarding subjects at school (Waters et al., 2014). It is the interplay between these factors that shapes the unique choices of an individual, representing the nuances of each person's prior experiences and their influences on current behaviour. As the choice of electives occurs during adolescence, individuals are still in the process of understanding themselves and their capabilities, requiring careful consideration of both external and personal factors to formulate a decision and weigh advantages and disadvantages of involvement. External factors such as the opinions of trusted adults and the stability of future industries can sway a students' decision, however individual factors such as competency, the satisfaction of needs and utility value play a greater role. This is because students are beginning to understand the gravity of their decisions, and the more long-term effects academic-related choices can have in their lives (Galliot & Graham, 2015; Myers, 2005; Rousseau & Venter, 2009; Tang et al., 2008).

#### **2.3.2.1 External Factors.**

External factors outside of an individual's direct control such as their parents, teachers, and community can shape their beliefs and choices directly and indirectly (Arnoux et al., 2009; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Naugah et al., 2020; Sankır & Sankır, 2019). These have been shown in several studies to influence the choice to continue with Music at school, and affect how students persist with tasks, skills and activities. These exist as key adult stakeholders such as parents and teachers who help daily to foster, support and nurture skills (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Sankır &

Sankır, 2019), alongside stable industries and workplaces in the community that inspire and excite students to become involved (Arnoux et al., 2009).

Several studies have noted the influence of adults in sending direct or indirect messages to students about the importance of participating in particular subjects (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Sankır & Sankır, 2019). One study examined the effect teachers have as role models on students, and whether differences existed between those with or without a Music teacher as a role model (Hamann & Walker, 1993). Of particular interest was the impact on students to pursue different higher education pathways, either related or unrelated to the discipline of the teacher role model. Findings emphasised the importance of having a role model of the same race and gender, which directly influenced post-secondary choices and their intentions to continue pursuing the discipline beyond school (Hamann & Walker, 1993).

The role that parents play in shaping and influencing subject choice has also been noted by more recent studies (Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Sankır & Sankır, 2019), which identify family as significant sources of original motivation to participate, particularly in creative arts disciplines. An investigation into the experiences of Australian secondary school students with immigrant backgrounds noted the important influence of their parents (Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019). It was shown that parents help shape beliefs, educational values, past educational opportunities, career aspirations and perceptions of cultural barriers that exist, which all help to guide student choice of subjects in school and beyond (Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019). Similar findings were noted in a Turkish study, which suggested that characteristics and occupations were often reproduced in the next generation whether intentionally or otherwise (Sankır & Sankır, 2019). This is because individuals can view their parents interacting with skills, knowledge and resources to understand the ‘rules of the game’ before deciding whether to participate themselves (Sankır & Sankır, 2019). They also noted that teachers play supporting, nurturing and guiding roles within schools to identify student interest and foster related skills (Sankır & Sankır, 2019). This demonstrates the direct and indirect influence of adult stakeholders, whose positions as role models convey meaning to students about the importance of various subjects and skill disciplines (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; Sankır & Sankır, 2019).

The role of schools in meeting the socioeconomic needs of a nation also influences students in the choices they make regarding their ongoing learning (Arnoux et al., 2009; Board of Studies, 2006, 2009a, 2009b). As curriculums are updated to reflect the changing requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century life, and what it means to be a competent, productive member of society, students are being sent unconscious messages about what industries and skills are most valuable. A French study into the mathematics-related choices of students highlighted the importance of well-paid industries to support post-compulsory uptake of subjects and disciplines (Arnoux et al., 2009). The study noted that the sociocultural climate of an area is of importance to students when considering a career pathway, with individuals pursuing job opportunities that are seen as vital to the progression of the community (Arnoux et al., 2009). The impact of industry on the school system can therefore be observed, as low uptake of particular subjects could be linked back to political or social tensions that exist, which indicate what is valued in that society and can directly and indirectly affect the choices made by those wanting to be involved. However, there are potential limitations that emerge from developing industry-oriented programs which only aim to meet the needs and provide skills for a particular job or discipline. This can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, and raises issues when instructors are no longer involved or in-touch with what is currently happening within the industry (Arnoux et al., 2009). Therefore, while industry can provide guidelines for what is deemed necessary skills and knowledge, education programs that only teach to these requirements can limit the development of students involved.

In sum, external factors have been identified in the literature as having an important influence on the subject choices of students. Adults were shown to send direct and indirect messages to students about their engagement in certain subjects, while parents often served as the initial motivation and support for participating in Music. The influence of the community and wider society was also demonstrated to impact what skills are perceived as valuable, and therefore what career pathways are encouraged. These are considered external influences as they occur outside of the control of the individual involved in the decision-making process. The next section will discuss the individual factors that influence students' choice of subjects at school.

#### **2.3.2.2 Individual Factors.**

Studies have also suggested that individual variables have an even greater deal of influence over the student decision making process than external factors (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Ball

et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2013; Burak, 2014; Eccles, 1983; Freer & Evans, 2018; Harvey, 1984; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; Waters et al., 2014). Despite variations in context and theoretical framework, the literature basis suggests that the choice of elective subjects and associated skills aligns with an individuals' 1) competencies, expectations and values, 2) psychological needs and 3) future aspirations and perceptions of usefulness. Research seems to indicate that these individual variables play a more significant role in determining choice, particularly as students become older and solidify their sense of selves throughout adolescence (Waters et al., 2014).

The choices made by students directly reflect their internal measures of personal competency, value and expectations for success that are held towards a subject or task. Previous studies identified a linear decrease in ability beliefs throughout primary school, particularly in relation to academic achievement in instrumental Music, mathematics, reading and sport (Ball et al., 2016; Barnes et al., 2005; Freer & Evans, 2018; McPherson et al., 2015; Waters et al., 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). This decrease continues into secondary school, with the most significant changes occurring during the Year 10 to 11 transition point, as students begin to solidify their self-concepts and make decisions regarding their futures. A study comparing Music and sport enrolment intentions revealed that generally, individuals perceive themselves as less capable in Music, valuing it less than other subjects and therefore displaying more motivation towards others which they have positive concepts towards (Waters et al., 2014). Another study found that students value tasks they expect to succeed in, with the most important status held for those subjects they expect to achieve highly in (Eccles, 2005). Value directly influences the approach to a task or situation, and affects the decision-making process, particularly in relation to elective subjects and involvement (Eccles, 2005).

Investigations into choices made by students also reveal the significance of satisfying personal, basic psychological needs from being involved, and the influence these have on their intentions to continue (Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Freer & Evans, 2018, 2019). These stem from the larger Expectancy-Value theory basis, which hypothesises that academic choices are a function of a students' expectancies for success and their value of the activity. Through meeting these needs of autonomy, competency and relatedness, individuals begin to develop a sense of value for the task and an understanding of how they 'fit in' within the environment (Freer & Evans, 2018). They must have some degree of independence, a feeling of success and an understanding of the application and usefulness of the knowledge in order to engage and begin

to ascribe value to the task. This can be summarised in the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which theorises that by incorporating these three needs into tasks, active participation can be heightened which ultimately results in growth and a greater sense of wellbeing for the individual (Freer & Evans, 2018). Being involved in activities and tasks that allow individuals to explore their own capacity for autonomy, competence and relatedness helps them to accept these situational values and assimilate these into a sense of self. Previous studies have also identified that needs satisfaction is linked to the length of engagement for children and adolescents, and with the motivation and practice quality of university students (Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Freer & Evans, 2019).

Research using SDT has identified links between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and a students' valuing of and choosing to study Music at school (Freer & Evans, 2018; Waters et al., 2014). A study of 204 male Stage 4 students in a NSW secondary school found that elective intentions were mediated by the individual's sense of value for the task; students would be more likely to continue when they held a value for the subject, and they were more likely to value it when their needs were being fulfilled in related tasks (Freer & Evans, 2018). The study also took into account the effect of previous instrumental learning experiences. Although students who were learning an instrument were more likely to pick Music on their elective schedules, value and needs satisfaction were far more significant influences on the decision-making process (Freer & Evans, 2018). Another investigation used SDT to account for the range of influences on choice, comparing the intentions of 293 students in a private NSW boys secondary school to take sport and/or Music for a Stage 5 elective (Waters et al., 2014). It was concluded that interest had the highest influence over choice, followed by the perception of the subject as important, continuing with the industry after school, being and/or feeling good at the subject and liking the teacher (Waters et al 2014). Another significant finding was the importance of relatedness; the degree to which tasks were useful and grounded in real-world situations. In essence, students needed support to help make sense of the information presented and the connections that existed within the content in order to identify it as significant and valuable (Waters et al 2014). In both of these investigations, students who had their needs supported demonstrated greater value for involvement in their chosen subject and were more likely to make related choices to continue their participation. This demonstrates the significance of the need for autonomy, competence and relevance in classroom activities, particularly for the longevity of student interest and engagement with the subject.

The choices students make have also been linked to their future aspirations, and measures of utility value for a particular subject or task. A range of studies (Amettler & Ryder, 2015; Bennett et al., 2013; Harvey, 1984) emphasise the emerging significance of future career pathways, which increases throughout secondary school, and reaches a peak for most students during the transition from compulsory education settings to tertiary environments. As students begin to reach the end of their compulsory schooling, they are forced to consider ‘what’s next?’. An English study into the impact of school science experiences on post-compulsory subject choice, found that the main influencers over a students’ enrolment decisions were their perceptions of future career pathways, and school-related factors such as attainment, teacher quality and their enjoyment of the subject (Amettler & Ryder, 2015). The study also found that the content of a subject was only seen as a motivator if it aligned with other variables such as their attainment level and career aspirations (Amettler & Ryder, 2015). This confirmed the results of an earlier study also in the English context, which found that the uptake of chemistry and physics subjects were directly related to career aspirations, the personal identity of students and their prior experiences (Bennett et al., 2013). Students from schools that had a higher-uptake of science subjects were shown to make proactive choices about their future study based in career aspirations or future life skills, while those from lower-uptake environments made reactive choices founded on prior experience (Bennett et al., 2013). This highlights the significance of future pathways to students when they are making subject-based decisions, while demonstrating salient variables in the choice process for teenagers.

Although literature highlights the concern students have over their future pathways and the consideration that goes into making related decisions, other studies emphasise that this is balanced with the daily significance and enjoyment derived from involvement. For this reason, it can be said that students participate in subjects because of both current and future factors (Thomson et al., 2018). Although students noted the future relevance of subjects and skills as highly influential in their decision-making processes, a study of 30 visual and performing arts schools in England highlighted the significance that individuals derive from daily involvement, and value its space in their timetables (Thomson et al., 2018). This also sends important messages to students about what daily life is like outside of school, helping individuals begin to structure their days to get a sense of what is personally valuable and fulfilling (Thomson et al., 2018)



To review, individual factors have been shown to have a greater influence on the student choice of subjects at school than external variables. A critical analysis of the literature field revealed three major groups of individual factors that influence student choice. The first group includes student measures of competency, expectation and value related to the subject and tasks involved. Another group of influencing factors includes the psychological needs such as relatedness, autonomy and competency that are satisfied through involvement in a subject or task. The last group of individual factors includes the future aspirations and perceptions of usefulness that are related to a subject and the skills and knowledge that are involved. These individual variables have been shown in the literature to mediate the choices of students in relation to the subjects they choose to study at school.

In sum, a critical review of the literature regarding student subject choice revealed patterns within the influencing variables that mediate these decisions. External and individual groups of factors were shown to have varying degrees and pathways of influence on a students' choice to engage in certain subjects, demonstrating consistency across international contexts. External factors such as adult stakeholders, parents and the needs of the surrounding community were identified as having direct and indirect influences on the beliefs and choices related to subject choice. However, analysis showed a greater diversity of individual factors which represented the nuanced nature of subject choice. These individual factors included measures of competency, expectancies, values, the satisfaction of psychological needs and the identification of future aspirations and associated perception of usefulness. Each group of factors play a role in influencing the student choice of subjects, but to varying degrees depending on the subject, educational context and individual making the decision.

This section presented literature related to the student choice of subjects. First, a summary of previously studied contexts and subjects were discussed. The theoretical perspectives used in subject-choice literature were then reviewed, followed by the identification of thematic variables used to guide various studies. Two major groups of external and individual influencing factors were identified, critically analysed and discussed which explored the reasons behind students choosing different subjects to study at school. Literature was presented to unpack each group of factors, which revealed the greater impact of individual factors when students are making subject choices. As this section discussed more general conclusions about

student subject choice, the next section will shift to analysing literature related to the specific choice of Music as a subject and the range of influencing contexts, theories and variables.

## **2.4 Choosing Music as a Subject**

When considering the body of literature related to subject choice, there are only a small number of studies directly interested in Creative Arts subjects (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011; Hamann & Walker, 1993; Mandler, 2017; Sankir & Sankir, 2019; Thomson et al., 2018) and more specifically, Music (de Boise, 2018; Hamann & Walker, 1993; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Waters et al., 2014). For this reason, much more tenuous conclusions can be drawn about the relationships between factors than those for other subjects, until a more systematic, comprehensive and contemporary review of student Music-related choices can be made. Music has been consistently shown in studies to be either the lowest, or one of the lowest valued and chosen subjects at school, despite the benefits provided and the enjoyment derived from involvement (Baker, 2009; Freer & Evans, 2019; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Myers, 2005; Reddy et al., 2012; Warton, 1997; Waters et al., 2014). While the investigations that have been conducted do seem to conclude similar themes and ideas as raised in general choice literature, the nuances at play are still relatively unknown.

A historical review of subject choices of secondary school students in the UK over the last 50 years shows a greater preference of and value placed on creative exploration (Mandler, 2017). More specifically, students who incorporated social sciences, traditional humanities and Creative Arts subjects into their schedules were at an educational advantage to their peers who had chosen more narrow, academic pathways (Mandler, 2017). The patterns and trends across the years reflected sociocultural changes in the working industry, with greater value now placed on creativity and self-expression, and those subjects which allow for it. Results also showed that higher achieving students had a greater diversity of subjects within their schedules than their peers. This contradicted the findings of a later study which found that lower performance in secondary school was linked with taking a greater diversity of subjects, ultimately leading to poorer performance within engineering programs (Lowe et al., 2019). In looking at the enrolment schedules of secondary school students, compared with their entry and achievement in tertiary engineering degrees, it was concluded that higher performing students benefitted from broader challenges, while those lower achievers needed a narrow focus in their schedules

to practice skills and knowledge (Lowe et al., 2019). Despite contrary findings, the literature emphasises links between subject choice in secondary school and future career aspirations, with societal and industrial changes that reinforce the contemporary significance of creativity, problem solving and self-expression.

The largest global investigation of the student choice of Music comes from the work of McPherson and O'Neill (2010), who applied Eccles' EVT framework to analyse motivation to study Music in comparison to other subjects of mother tongue, science, mathematics, Visual Arts and physical education. Focusing on motivation variables of personal competence belief, value and task difficulty, McPherson and O'Neill (2010) collated the survey responses from 24,143 Music and non-Music learning students in grades 5-12 from eight different countries, to conclude that Music was consistently valued less and ascribed lower task difficulty ratings than all other subjects except for Visual Arts. They also noted higher competency beliefs for physical education and mother tongue learning than Music, but lower beliefs for subjects of mathematics and Visual Arts (McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). The conclusions drawn by McPherson and O'Neill represent the culmination of data from eight different country contexts, and reveal the similarities faced when trying to engage students in Music education globally. Individual country investigations were conducted in

- **Brazil** (Hentschke, 2010),
- **China** (Xie & Leung, 2011)
- **Hong Kong** (Leung & McPherson, 2010)
- **The U.S.A** (McPherson & Hendricks, 2010)
- **Israel** (Portowitz et al., 2010) and
- **South Korea** (Seog et al., 2011)

Data was collected and individually analysed, before being compared by McPherson and O'Neill in their comparative investigation with results showing consistency in the way students valued and approached musical tasks. Although there was an overall decline in motivation towards studying any subject over their time at school, Music was ranked by students as one of the least valuable and difficult subjects in all contexts except for Brazil (Hentschke, 2010). There was an overall general decline in motivation across grades, but interestingly, Music-learners had higher competency beliefs, values and lower perceptions of difficulties across all subjects, compared to non-Music learners (McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). This seems to indicate that those involved in Music were more motivated, interested and experienced less

difficulties in all areas of their schooling. The research also suggests a need to increase and advocate for the values ascribed to learning Music by individuals, which may in turn encourage more uptake of the subject. McPherson and O'Neill (2010) highlighted that it was not necessarily a problem of participation, but the way students think about and ascribe meaning to music in their own lives. In other words, for students who choose not to engage in Music, teachers need to consider how music has been presented and explored previously and the place it currently occupies in an individual's daily routine in order to fully appreciate their choice about continuation.

McPherson and O'Neill's (2010) investigation into the student choice of Music was later repeated in the Australian context by McPherson, Osbourne, Barret, Davidson and Faulkner (2015), which again showed the overall significant decline in competence beliefs, values, interest, importance and usefulness towards Music, contrasted against the increased ratings of task difficulty. The same patterns were noted between Music- and non-Music learners, in which those involved reported significantly higher motivational profiles (derived from EVT factors) than those who were not (McPherson et al., 2015). This motivational advantage applied across all grades for Music involvement, in competence beliefs towards studying English for upper primary and lower secondary school students, and for mathematics study in lower secondary school (McPherson et al., 2015).

To review within the literature field related to student subject choice, there are only a small number of studies investigating the choice of Creative Arts subjects and more specifically Music. McPherson and O'Neill's (2010) comprehensive global investigation into the factors influencing the choice of Music emphasised a decline in motivation across grade levels, with Music consistently valued less, and ascribed lower task difficulty rating than all other subjects except for Visual Arts. This study was repeated by McPherson and colleagues (2015) within the Australian context which confirmed the decline in measures of value, usefulness, importance, interest and competence beliefs related to involvement, while the perception of task difficulty increases. Using EVT as a framework in both studies, conclusions were drawn about the improvements to an individuals' motivation as a result of Music involvement, with findings suggesting that once students had experience in a Music program, they were more motivated towards other school subjects (McPherson & O'Neill, 2010).

### *2.4.1 Theoretical Insights*

Considering the previous investigations into the student choice of Music, it is clear that studies can adopt a motivation-theory based framework to account for the wide range of influencing variables at play (Ball et al., 2016; Burak, 2014; Ding et al., 2013; González-Moreno, 2012; Guo et al., 2015; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Naugah et al., 2020; Plante et al., 2013). One of the most beneficial and commonly used frameworks comes from Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), as it incorporates student expectancies of success and self, as well as values of importance, usefulness and cost of participation to explain choice (Ball et al., 2016; Ding et al., 2013; Eccles, 1983; Hill & O'Dell, 2014). Atkinson (1957) believes that achievement motivations are derived from a want to approach success and avoid failure, with decisions guided by assessments of the probability of achievement, and the value of the task and its products (Ball et al., 2016; Hill & O'Dell, 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Eccles and colleagues expanded EVT into an educational context with the development of the General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC). This choice model acknowledges the psychological determining factors and causal relationships that influence the expectancies and values of students (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 1995, 2002; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000). This allows researchers to investigate beyond the larger subdivisions of EVT into the determinants of these particular behaviours, attributes and perceptions. First developed to explore student engagement with mathematics, subsequent studies have also applied this model to other STEM subject areas such as science electives of physics, chemistry and biology and sport (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, 2000). The GMAC has been used in studies to analyse for motivation factors that underpin the academic decisions individuals make, hypothesising that tasks and subjects will only be chosen when both student expectancies and task values are high (Ball et al., 2016; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). A further discussion of both theories, including figures of both models is included in Chapter 3.

Eccles originally developed the GMAC from an investigation into the gender disparities between advanced mathematics course enrolment (Eccles, 1983). This study illuminated a network of variables that influence the choice, persistence and achievement of students, stemming from EVT and motivational theory (Eccles, 1983). Eccles (1991) later applied the GMAC to explain enrolment and gender trends in sport, demonstrating another interdisciplinary application of the model. This study highlighted how interest and competency in

sport does not develop until much later than other subjects such as English, mathematics or science (Eccles & Harold, 1991). In this case, enrolment rates are expected to be varied as choice is more dependent on individual differences in beliefs, self-perception and social experiences. The study also found a negative relationship between ability concepts in sport and Music. As their musical self-concept increases, their ability perception and interest in sport decreases, and vice versa (Eccles & Harold, 1991). This could help to explain why students choose some subjects over others, yet more investigation into the Music context is needed.

An additional study also used the GMAC in their examination of science enrolment intentions, adapting it into the Science Enrolment Model in order to align student-identified variables with theory (Barnes et al., 2005). The model was chosen as it takes into account the integrative nature of variables affecting students, rather than focusing on a particular subset of causes (Barnes et al., 2005). The study identified links between personality factors and enrolment choice, which were mediated by the task's value (Barnes et al., 2005). This meant that the vocational, educational and recreational preferences of students were shown to play a role in determining achievement behaviours (Barnes et al., 2005).

In summary, Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy Value Theory and Eccles' (1983) extensions to the educational setting have been demonstrated as significant conceptual understandings, used in previous studies to understand the subject choice behaviours of students (Barnes et al., 2005; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). A discussion of related literature revealed the GMAC as a useful theoretical framework to unpack the network of related variables that influence subject choice behaviours and pathways. Further identification of influencing factors are presented in the following paragraphs to identify specific themes related to the choice of Music.

#### ***2.4.2 Why are Students Participating in Music?***

While literature has shown that student choice is influenced by external and individual factors, Music-related studies reveal a greater emphasis is placed on personal reasons for participating (Freer & Evans, 2018, 2019; Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019; Lowe, 2011; Waters et al., 2014). This sees students choosing subjects that they find interesting, enjoyable or fulfilling, rather than determined or induced by a parent, peer or teacher. However, the influence of these external factors cannot be understated, as these can still send unconscious and indirect

messages to individuals about their choices and behaviours (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; McPherson et al., 2015; Sankır & Sankır, 2019). Rather, the reasons offered by students for their choice of Music reflect the extrinsic and intrinsic purposes for Music education which are individually internalised (Temmerman, 1991).

Research has shown the significant role interest plays in influencing choice behaviours related to Music education (Dik & Rottinghaus, 2013; Lowe, 2011; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Waters et al., 2014). A study comparing male secondary students' intentions to take elective Music and/or sport suggested that students were more likely to participate in the subject with their highest level of personal interest (Waters et al., 2014). Barriers for participation were shown to be higher for Music than for sport, however, data indicated that students derived their choices from what they were interested in more than any other variable (Waters et al., 2014). Students made judgements of and comparisons between subjects particularly during curriculum transition points of Stage 5 and Stage 6, choosing subjects that were of personal interest (Waters et al., 2014). This indicates the significant role of interest in the subject choice behaviours of students.

Studies have also revealed the importance of assigning a subjective value to a task or subject, and the resulting impact on the choice of Music (Ball et al., 2016; Freer & Evans, 2018; Lowe, 2011). Through the identification of relevant attainment goals (including personal relevance), intrinsic variables (situational and individual interest) and extrinsic variables (short-term vs long-term usefulness), students begin to ascribe a subjective value to their choice of subject (Lowe, 2011). Subjects that students valued more highly than others were more likely to be chosen to study, with data showing a significant decline in goal orientation, situational interest and the perception of long-term usefulness in all subjects throughout school (Lowe, 2011). More specifically, students expressed that it became increasingly less important to succeed in class Music, with tasks also becoming less enjoyable as the curriculum progresses (Lowe, 2011). Therefore, for a student to continue, they must have acknowledged a long-term value of the skill or related knowledge-basis to their careers or general life (Lowe, 2011). This emphasises the significance of ascribing a subjective value when considering the reasons behind students' choice of subjects.

The satisfaction of psychological needs has also been shown to play a role in influencing the Music subject choice behaviours of students, as students follow pathways that align with their sense of self (Freer & Evans, 2018, 2019; Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019). Researchers have posited that individual needs of autonomy, competency and relatedness were satisfied through participation and achievement in Music (Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019). The satisfaction of psychological needs was shown to be a predictor of the individual value of Music, as well as their future elective intentions and expected grade (Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019). Value was seen as an internalised component, but not necessarily a separate factor affecting these choices. A significant relationship was noted between the satisfaction of needs and the expected grade, with higher achievement found in those who derived a greater need or value for their involvement (Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019). It was therefore more likely that, regardless of performance or achievement, students would participate in Music if they felt their needs were being met from involvement (Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019). This aids in internalising a value for the subject and related tasks and skills, and could indicate a need for teachers to focus on the satisfaction of students rather than specific beliefs or values individuals may hold towards Music.

In summary, the relatively small body of literature related to the student choice of Music as a subject indicate a greater significance of individual factors than external factors on influencing these decisions. Critical analysis of these studies revealed that the choice of Music was mainly mediated by a students' measure of interest, subjective value related the subject, and how well it is able to satisfy psychological needs such as competency, relatedness and autonomy.

This section discussed current understandings regarding the student choice of Music education, particularly the context of Australian secondary schools. Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) was introduced, along with Eccles' (1983) adaptations into the General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) as a theoretical framework to examine subject choice. Critical analysis of related studies and literature regarding the student choice of Music showed an emphasis of individual factors, indicating the significant role that interest, subjective value and satisfying psychological needs of autonomy, competency and relevancy plays in the decision process.



## 2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a review of literature related to the student choice of Music as a subject in secondary school, comprised of three sections. The first section offered a general overview of Music education in schools, its place in the curriculum and arguments offered for its purpose and justification. It began with a discussion of the significance Music holds to adolescents as a way of regulating their mood, relating to others and engaging with the world around them. The benefits of Music programs to a range of student contexts were also considered to demonstrate how Music develops multifaceted skills and knowledge which can be transferred to other industries and domains. The place of Music in education was also presented, as a strand within the Creative Arts curriculum, which is mandatory until the end of Stage 4, Year 8. After this time, Music becomes an elective subject which requires student choice to be involved; it is at this time which a large majority of students choose to disengage from the Music curriculum. This leaves smaller and smaller populations of students within Stage 5 and Stage 6 Music courses who achieve at a consistently high rate despite their small class sizes (Board of Studies, 2020).

The second section discussed literature related to the student choice of subjects, including previously studied contexts, subjects and theoretical perspectives. The global interest in the student choice of subjects was discussed, with major interest shown in STEM subject uptake and a smaller body of literature related to languages and Creative Arts. Theories used in these studies to investigate student choice were also presented which revealed the significance of motivational frameworks such as Atkinson's (1957) EVT and Eccles' (1983) educational extensions in understanding these behaviours. Personal variables such as gender and personality, and external variables such as socioeconomic status, teachers, parents, achievement and career development were adopted to guide the range of literature which reflected patterns in the way students choose subjects. From the critical analysis of studies into the student choice of subjects, it can be concluded that both external and internal factors play a role in influencing decisions. These include the external impacts from adults such as parents and teachers, and the way industries shape the requirements of the curriculum and wider schooling system. Internal measures of value, success, competency, usefulness, interest, the satisfaction of psychological needs and the pursuit of future aspirations were also shown to impact the subject-related decisions made by students.

The final section highlighted what is already known in the literature field about the student choice of Music education, extrapolating to the specific Australian secondary school context. First, a critical analysis of McPherson and O'Neill's (2010) investigation was presented, which adopted Eccles' theory to understand the student choice of Music in eight different global contexts. McPherson and colleagues's (2015) repetition of the study within the Australian context showed consistency in the way students approach musical tasks and value the subject within school (McPherson et al., 2015). There was a general decline in motivation to study throughout school, with Music consistently ranked as one of the least valuable subjects in all countries studied except for Brazil (Hentschke, 2010). Furthermore, these studies demonstrated a decline in competency beliefs, values, importance and usefulness associated with Music, with a perception of increasing difficulty throughout the curriculum (McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). However, Music students were shown to have higher motivational profiles than non-Music students, which carried over into other subjects and allowed them to be maintain their engagement and achieve at higher rates (McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). This section also presented details of Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy Value Theory and Eccles' (1983) adaptations of this theory into an educational context with the General Model of Academic Choice. This framework has been used within the literature field to understand the network of influencing variables at play on student choice.

The next chapter will outline the research methods, design and structure used in this study. It will also discuss the data collection and analysis procedures and present the researchers' subjectivities and roles within the investigation. Ethical considerations, and procedures related to credibility and reliability are discussed regarding the quality of the study.

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the methodological design, approaches and procedures used within this study to investigate the student choice of Music education in Australian secondary schools. This chapter first discusses the epistemology, research paradigm, and the theoretical framework adopted for this study. A detailed description of Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) framework is provided, followed by the research questions that guided this investigation. Next, details of the research procedures are provided, including details of the ethical considerations, consent and confidentiality practices, site selection and case organisation. A discussion of the role of the researcher, including any potential subjectivities are also presented in this section. An outline of the data collection methods is then provided, which describes three phases of data collection and the research tools used in the study. The three phases of data analysis are then discussed; 1) preliminary analysis of sources, 2) data compilation and vignette creation, and 3) a cross-case analysis to compare findings between participant cases and with the theoretical framework. To conclude the chapter, credibility and reliability approaches have been outlined to explore the quality of the study.

### **3.2 Epistemology**

This research was founded on a constructivist epistemology that acknowledges meaning is made through interactions and experiences with other people (Flick, 2014; Given, 2016). With this research approach, meaning is built through examining interactions with others within specific social contexts, which assists individuals to make sense of their experiences and help to interpret and shape future actions (Allen & Bickhard, 2011; Fox, 2010). Individuals have their own unique meaning and interpretation of experiences, according to each context and influenced by personal factors such as prior knowledge or practice (Fox, 2010; Lui & Chen, 2010). These demographic and social factors can cause differences in the learning capacities, capabilities and efficacies of students (Fox, 2010; Eccles, 1983), and therefore must be acknowledged for their potential influence on subject choice in Music in this study. Attributions of prior experiences, and perceptions of key socialisers also feature as essential determinants of choice and persistence within Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC). The GMAC acknowledges the importance of past experiences, attributions and the perception of other people in affecting the choices and persistence of students within subjects (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

This represents further links between the theoretical framework chosen and the constructivist epistemology underpinning this study.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

This section discusses the research paradigm used in the study. First, a discussion of qualitative research approaches is presented, followed by a description of the embedded case study design adopted to investigate the student choice of Music education.

#### ***3.3.1 Qualitative Approach***

Qualitative research is an exploratory approach, which allows researchers to investigate unknown variables relating to a particular subject or group of people previously unstudied (Creswell, 2015). This aids in developing an understanding of the phenomena in question using collected data from first-hand participant experiences. By drawing on a range of participants, the study can investigate diverse perspectives on the topic to use experience and participant created meaning as the basis of evidence and interpretation within the study (Atkins & Wallace, 2011; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Katsuko, 1995).

To answer the research questions, this study also required a degree of reflectivity and adaptability in relation to the site visits and interaction with participants. This was to accommodate the nature of adolescent conversation, and day-to-day classroom activities which are adaptive and unpredictable. This was also to ensure that all areas of the theoretical framework were adequately investigated and explored with the participants before the creation (and subsequent comparison) of the individual student vignettes. This is also a key feature of qualitative research, as sampling methods and coding strategies can be modified throughout the process as the data is collected (Oliver, 2015). In this way, the links and relationships can be examined as they unfold within the data set as significant themes emerge and connect with participant experiences.

As knowledge in the area of Music as a subject selection choice is fairly limited, an exploratory approach was required in order to create a full and accurate picture of the current phenomena at work. Exploratory approaches provide researchers opportunities to take into account specific contexts, which may affect the participants and influence the meanings ascribed to certain experiences (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative design allows researchers to understand and

appreciate the influence of context, and any affects it may have on meaning and experience; also a common feature of constructivist-based studies (Fox, 2010).

In order to identify the student experiences of Music that contribute to the decisions made regarding their continuation of study, the methods of data collection needed to provide comprehensive insight into each individual participant. To facilitate this an embedded case study design was adopted. Interviews, surveys, observations and document collection were used to gather data related to the individual experience of Music education (Creswell, 2015; Flick, 2014; Katsuko, 1995; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). These designs and related data collection methods are discussed in subsequent sections.

### ***3.3.2 Embedded Case Study Design***

Case study research provides a framework for in-depth description and analysis of a particular phenomenon within real-life situations, where the causal relationships between variables remains unknown (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gerring, 2011; Rule & John, 2015; Stake, 2005; Yin, 1994, 2009). Multiple sources of data are gathered to develop an accurate, detailed picture of the case in question, with a focus on answering research questions that seek to identify many variables of interest (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Pearson et al., 2015). While generalisability is not the main aim of case study research, the conclusions drawn about a case can have further applications within a field, with results that focus more on analytical and theoretical, rather than statistical, generalisation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rule & John, 2015).

An embedded case study focuses on a single case, bounded by context and is representative of the phenomena of interest. However, multiple subsets within the case can be identified for further investigation, which each offer a unique influence or variation on the phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this reason, embedded case studies can often be confused with multiple-case study designs (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Gerring, 2011; Yin, 2009); while both examine a range of subsets from one particular case, the subsets within an embedded study share the same context and binding variables (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Gerring, 2011; Yin, 1994, 2009).

This investigation adopted an embedded case study design to collect multiple perspectives on the phenomena of Music education in schools, while providing insight into the applicability of the GMAC to understanding motivations to study a particular creative arts subject. The phenomena of interest centres around the subject choice behaviours of students involved with Music education in secondary school, while sharing the same context and variables of the school, teacher and subjects on offer.

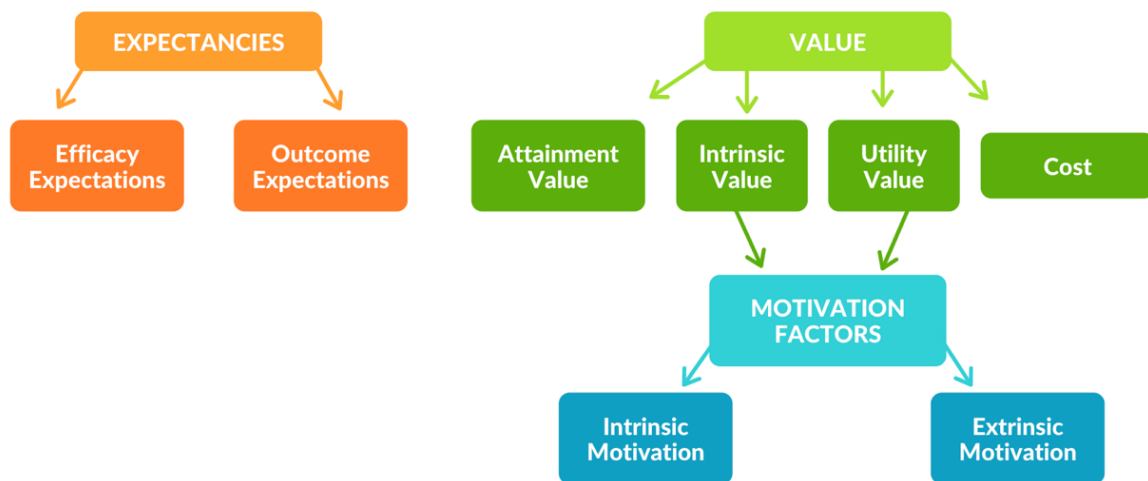
### **3.4 Theoretical Framework**

As this study is focused on the factors influencing the student choice of Music as a subject at school, a motivational theory framework was required to explore the relationship between variables on overall behaviour. Previous studies concerned with student subject choice have used Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC), developed for the educational context from Atkinson's (1957) original Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). The GMAC has been used in previous investigations of mathematics, science and sport subject choice, particularly the gender differences between those involved. To apply this model to a Creative Arts context would allow researchers to identify the patterns in factors that affect the academic choice of students, and help explain why students choose, persist and achieve in Music. This study provided insight into the participant experience of Music education which, when analysed and compared with the GMAC, would demonstrate the networks and patterns that ultimately determine student academic choice (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000).

Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) stems from Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy-Value Theory, describing how achievement motivation is derived from a want to approach success and avoid failure (Atkinson, 1957; Ball et al., 2016; Eccles, 1983; Hill & O'Dell, 2014). A model of the components of EVT is shown in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1.**

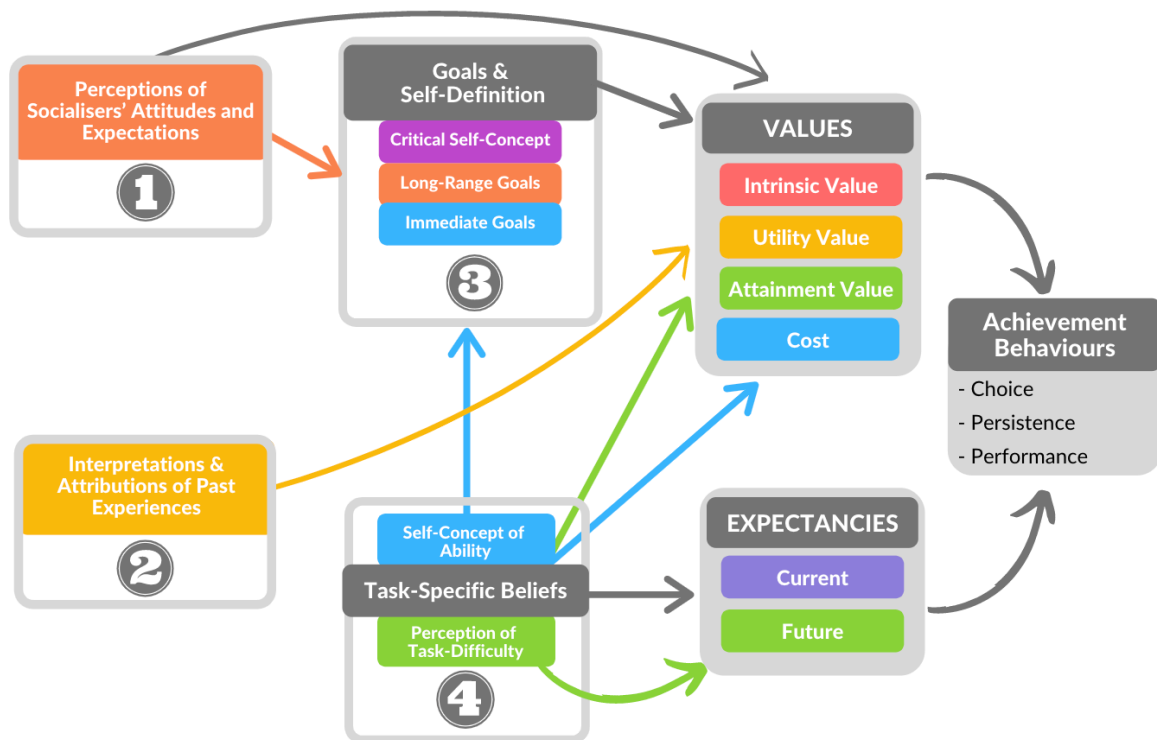
*Model of Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) Components. Adapted from Atkinson (1957) and Eccles, Wigfield and colleagues' extensions (Barnes et al., 2005)*



According to Atkinson, decisions are guided by an assessment of the probability of success, and the value of the skills and knowledge related to participation (Atkinson, 1957; Ball et al., 2016; Hill & O'Dell, 2014). Eccles, Wigfield and colleagues elaborated these ideas into an educational context in the General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC), identifying that tasks will only be chosen when both student expectancies and task values are high (Ball et al., 2016; Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This model acknowledges psychological determining factors and the causal relationships existing between that influence the expectancies and values of students. In turn, the GMAC theorises that the expectancies and values developed towards subjects affect the individual choice, persistence and performance within those subjects (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000). Studies applying the GMAC to the student choice of mathematics, science and sport have illuminated and helped to group variables effecting the overall achievement behaviours of students; a representation of the GMAC, identifying these four variable groups is shown in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2.**

*The General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC). Adapted from Eccles (1983) and Barnes et al., (2005)*



### 3.4.1 Perceptions of Socialisers' Attitudes and Expectations

The perceptions students have of the expectations and attitudes of other people directly influence and help to shape their perceptions of themselves and the task at hand (Eccles, 1983). Within the GMAC, these 'other people' are referred to as socialisers, and include teachers, parents and peers that surround the individual student. Previous studies have also shown high school students being particularly susceptible to the views and pressures of their peers (Dekaney & Robinson, 2014; Neel, 2015). For this reason, a range of contextual factors including friendship groups, perceived popularity of a subject and effort to 'save-face', may influence student choice. There is also an observed positive relationship between the students' perceived parental expectation, and their actual self-concept. This also extends to their perception of task difficulty, with students more likely to engage and partake in subjects and tasks parents have shown support in or heightened importance of (Eccles, 1983). Older studies have minimised the impact of socialisers (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, 2000) while more contemporary investigations have increased their consideration of socialisers (Dekaney



& Robinson, 2014; Neel, 2015). This could suggest that an individual's perceptions of their own abilities help to influence those around them, and therefore point to a need to investigate the experiences of those involved from a qualitative perspective.

### ***3.4.2 Interpretations and Attributions of Past Experiences***

The GMAC theorises that an individual's past experiences, and their interpretations and attributions related to these experiences directly influences the value and achievement behaviours of students (Eccles, 1983). This area of the framework includes the previous experiences that a student may have had in a particular area, such as familial influences or private out-of-school lessons that support skill development in a particular subject (Eccles, 1983). The interpretations and attributions that are made as a result of these experiences are based in an individual's locus of control, in which success is either attributed to stable or unstable factors (Eccles, 1983). When success is attributed to stable factors such as ability, the expertise of the teacher or a supportive learning environment, students show expected continued success and more positive concepts of self and the task (Eccles, 1983; Glasser, 1997; Purvis et al., 2015). It is thought that these are the students currently being reached in formal HSC courses of Music where achievement levels are high, but retention and enrolment levels are declining. However, when success attributed to unstable factors such as effort or luck, or no success is experienced at all, students are left feeling uncertain about the outcome (Eccles, 1983; Flake et al., 2015). Most concerning of all though is that when failure is attributed to stable outcomes, such as the belief that you are 'just not good enough', 'smart enough' or 'talented enough', it produces expectations of continued failure (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Flake et al., 2015). It is these latter two scenarios, which seem to be the most detrimental to enrolment in subjects such as mathematics, science and Music. In these cases, students attribute their success to luck, increased effort or ease-of-task, and their failures to being simply 'not smart enough', which leads to the subject getting a reputation of difficulty and cognitive hardship (Kynaston & Kynaston, 2014). It has been shown that these attributions contribute to ideas of ability and task difficulty, critical in development of self-concept.

### ***3.4.3 Goals and Self-Definition***

Within the GMAC framework, goal setting and self-definition are fundamental factors in the creation of student values towards subjects and tasks (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, 2000). This includes an individual's critical self-concept, their career

and future goals, and their perception of minimum standards (Eccles, 1983). How an individual perceives themselves generally as a student influences the way they interact with tasks and apply effort to achieve expected outcomes (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, 2000). This also influences, and is influenced by the associated goals they set, and how well the subject or task can achieve or align with these goals (Eccles, 1983). The goals and self-definition of students are directly linked with their task-specific beliefs, as a perception of minimum achievement standards is developed which mediates the amount of effort and focus applied to the situation (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, 2000). If a student perceives the task or subject as particularly important, or sees themselves as competent, their minimum achievement standard will be higher (Eccles, 1983). Conversely, when students view the task as difficult, irrelevant or unnecessary, what students expect of their own achievement is particularly low (Eccles, 1983).

#### ***3.4.4 Task-Specific Beliefs***

The final component of the GMAC framework includes the task-specific belief of students, involving their self-concept of related abilities and their perception of task difficulty (Eccles, 1983). Students' perceptions of themselves and their abilities become more pessimistic with age subjects (Ball et al., 2016; Barnes et al., 2005; Ding et al., 2013; Eccles, 1983; Guo et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). It has also been shown that self-concept of ability is one of the most important determining factors of task value, expectancy, performance and persistence (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, 2000). However, the causal determinants of these perceptions, and relationships to other variables influencing subject choice are not yet widely understood. Another aspect of an individual's task-specific belief includes their perception of task-difficulty, theorised within the GMAC to influence future expectancies of success (Eccles, 1983). Music has a varied reputation as a subject that is either too easy to bother with, or too difficult to try and engage in without a great deal of previous experience. This is similar to perceptions of mathematics and physics courses which share similar enrolment trends with Music and have been investigated using the GMAC in previous studies (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Lauermann et al., 2017). For this reason, this study included an investigation into the task-specific beliefs of students related to Music, to discover any potential links between the self-concept of ability and perception of task-difficulty with the overall choice to engage with the subject.

In sum, this section discussed Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice which formed the theoretical framework of this study. Based in Atkinson's (1957) Expectancy-Value Theory, the GMAC presents four groups of motivational factors which influence student choice, persistence and performance within subjects and tasks. This included; 1) the perceptions of socialisers' attitudes and expectations, 2) interpretations and attributions of past experiences, 3) student goals and self-definition, and 4) student task-specific beliefs.

### 3.5 Research Questions

The aim of this study was to investigate why students choose to study Music as a subject in Australian secondary schooling. To do so, contextual boundaries were established for the investigation to allow for deep qualitative insight into one specific NSW secondary school site and associated student participant cases. There was one overarching research question, and three research sub-questions that guided this study, used to further explore the specifically defined context:

#### **Overarching Research Question:**

*Why do students choose to study Music in secondary school?*

#### **Research Sub-Questions:**

*Within the context of NSW Australian secondary schooling:*

1. *What reasons do students give for choosing to study Music as a subject?*
2. *What factors influence students' decisions about commencing and continuing to study Music?*
3. *How do these factors interact to shape students' choices to study Music?*

### 3.6 Research Procedures

This section describes the research procedures for this study, including ethical considerations, site selection processes and the role of the researcher. The aim of this study was to understand why students choose and persist in their study Music as a subject in Australian secondary school. In response, this section first discusses the ethics approval required from two separate research committees, followed by the careful consideration of informed consent, minimisation of risk, and confidentiality practices. Then, a description of site selection, purposeful sampling,

participant recruitment procedures is presented before this section is concluded with an exploration of the role of the researcher within this study.

### ***3.6.1 Ethical Considerations***

Ethics approval was sought and obtained from the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee in 2017 (approval 2017/562 – Appendix A) and the NSW State Government Department of Education (approval SERAP 2017572 – Appendix B). Two levels of approval were required before the commencement of the study to minimise any foreseeable risks to the students, teachers and site involved. Ethical considerations were of particular importance to this study as it involved student participants, who were all under the age of 18 and legally still considered children (Creswell, 2014, 2015; Flick, 2014; Martin, 2000; Miles et al., 2014).

### ***3.6.2 Informed Consent***

All interested students were provided with official UOW information sheets and consent forms, containing the researcher's information, aims of the research and any expectations on participants (see Appendices C & D). These were accessible to students during the relationship establishment phase of the researcher's site engagement (Term 1, 2018), with time made available to students and their parents who had questions regarding the study's implementation and/or purpose. Only those students returning consent forms, signed by themselves and a parent or guardian, were asked to be involved in the study, with their participation considered completely voluntary. Students were made aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, without impact on their relationship with the University of Wollongong or the researcher. At the beginning of each interview and observation period, verbal consent was again sought from all participants for the researcher to continue data collection, with responses recorded in the accompanying notes. To date (March 2021), no participants have requested to withdraw their consent from any part of this study.

### ***3.6.3 Minimisation of Risk***

All experiences, observations and perceptions collected were viewed as evidence sources, with no intention to judge participants on their opinions, experiences or perspectives. This aligns with the study's constructivist foundation and qualitative design, in which meaning emerges from data collected (Creswell, 2015; Flick, 2014). As all of the student participants were under

the age of 18 and involved in compulsory schooling, interview times were arranged with the help of the teacher participant in order to minimise the amount of time students were withdrawn from class activities. The teacher put aside time during practical lessons for the researcher to withdraw students and conduct the interviews. There were also instances in which the teacher indicated students who had completed their tasks early or were undertaking extension activities which the researcher could also withdraw from class to conduct the necessary interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in order to prevent repetition or wasting time taking notes during the face-to-face interactions (Creswell, 2015; Martin, 2000).

#### ***3.6.4 Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Information***

All identifiable information such as the names of the involved school, teachers and students, were only known and accessible by the researcher conducting the interviews and observations to preserve their privacy (Creswell, 2014, 2015; Martin, 2000). For the comfort of participating students, the researcher established a relationship with each class to be approached for participation during Term 1 (2018), allowing for more in-depth, accurate and personal data to be collected. For this reason, the participants were unable to remain anonymous during the data collection phase. However, their identities were kept confidential, with all identifiable information removed during the analysis process, before being written about. Participant names (and the names of peers referred to in the study) were kept in vignette documents until each individual had undergone member checking processes to aid in their recollection and clearer understanding of how their experience was being portrayed. Pseudonyms were then applied to maintain confidentiality.

#### ***3.6.5 Site Selection, Purposeful Sampling and Participant Recruitment***

For this study, Chestnut High School provided the site for investigation. Chestnut High School was a public (state government funded) secondary school, and part of a wider system of twenty high school educational options for parents and students within the surrounding geographical area. The school site was sourced from supervisory professional networks.

Chestnut High School has approximately 1000 enrolled students, with 194 of these coming from non-English speaking backgrounds, and 51 students with Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Within the school during 2018, there were approximately 55 students enrolled in elective Music courses throughout Stage 5 and 6. Of these, the researcher was able

to access a total of 22 students enrolled the Year 9 and Year 11 classes at Chestnut High School. There are approximately 75 full-time teaching staff, ranging from those teaching on the main school campus, and those in an off-site unit that caters for students with physical, intellectual and behavioural difficulties including Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The school was first invited to participate with a letter to the principal (see Appendix E), before further discussions were held to select an appropriate Stage 4, Stage 5 and Stage 6 Music class that had the same teacher to form the subsets within the study. Within those stages Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 Music classes were selected to represent the subsets within the case as they shared the same defined context of the school, teacher and high school Music curriculum, but differed in their level of instruction and subject selection options.

Within **Stage 4, Year 8** was selected as these students would be required to make decisions regarding their elective intentions for Year 9 study and had recent experiences with the compulsory course from which to discuss their justifications. Of Mrs Maple's three Year 8 classes, one was selected as the focus class due to their lessons falling on the days when the researcher attended the site. This specific Year 8 class formed the first subset within the case.

From **Stage 5, Year 9** was selected due to these students having recently chosen to engage with the elective Music course. This would enable them to discuss with greater clarity their reasons for participating in the elective course, as well as provide insight into their continuation of Music study for the Higher School Certificate (HSC). Mrs Maple was responsible for teaching Year 9 elective Music, and due to low enrolment numbers, only one class was formed; this formed the second subset within the case.

Within **Stage 6, Year 11** was selected as the students would have recently chosen their HSC program of study and would be more likely to remember their reasons for doing so. The Year 11 students would be able to discuss their future intentions for continuing with Music education, as well as what they would be doing beyond school. While it would have been of interest to speak to students at the end of their high school education and due to the highly intensive nature of the HSC courses, seeking Year 12 students as participants would have most likely caused disruption to their schedules and revision patterns. The Year 12 class of 2018 was also taken by a different teacher (Mr Mahogany).

During the relationship establishment phase of the study in Term 1 (2018), the Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 class subsets were engaged with, to begin to identify potential participants for interview in the following data collection phases. The researcher attended each class, engaged with students and took note of those who had varied experiences, approaches and were willing to talk about their involvement in Music. This formed the basis of purposeful sampling procedures, which acknowledged students that were:

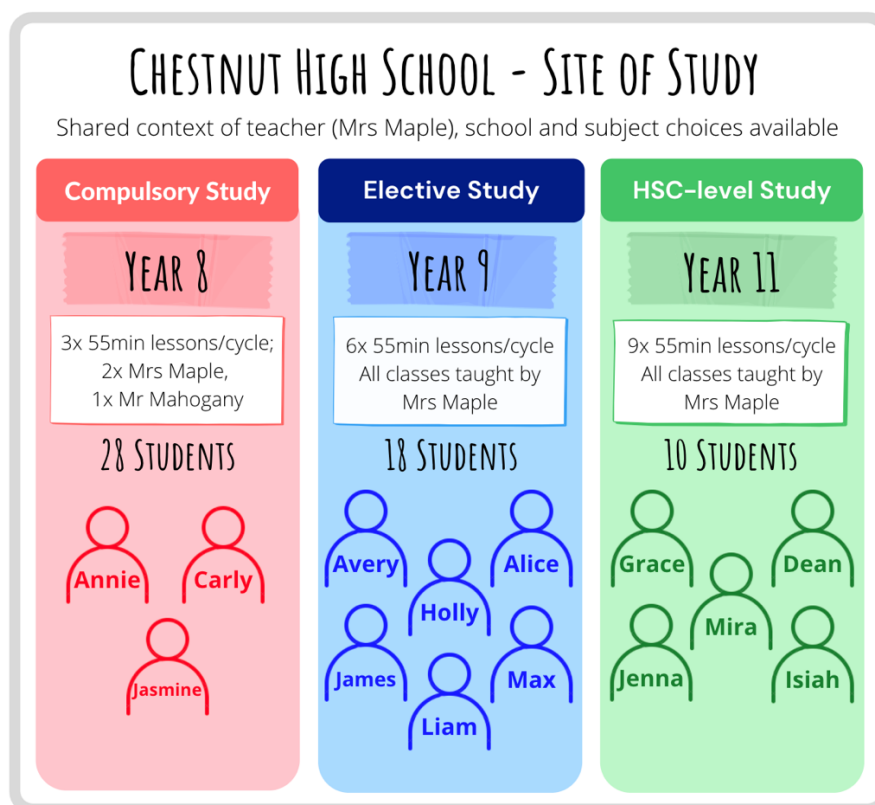
1. Currently undertaking formal Music education in the identified subset class of Stage 4, 5 or 6 at Chestnut High School
2. Willing to talk openly and freely about their Music experiences and future intentions for engagement

All students in the class were offered information sheets, consent forms and the chance to participate in the study. They were informed about the requirements of participation as well as the Spotify incentive on offer, in the form of a Spotify Premium membership for the duration of the study (6 months). There were 15 memberships available for participants in this study, allocated on a first-come-first-served basis through e-giftcards to those students who returned both their whole class consent (see Appendix C) and individual consent forms (see Appendix D). All students in the class were approached for consent to observe their classroom activities, with those who returned their forms first offered the chance to individually participate. This was in the hope of encouraging students to return their forms and gathering only those motivated to participate in the study. Some students who returned whole class consent also elected to participate in the survey component, although this was voluntary and only resulted in an extra five responses across all subsets (four from Year 9, and one from Year 11).

From this sampling and recruitment procedure, fourteen participants were identified across the three subsets of the study. Figure 3.3 illustrates the divisions between subsets, and the participants within each group. Within each class subset, individual student participants were identified who provided interview, survey, observation and document data, which gave insight into the choices of students related to Music education (Creswell, 2015; Fry et al., 2017; Whiting, 2008).

**Figure 3.3.**

*Model of Embedded Case Study Design, presenting Shared Site Context, Subsets and Participants from Chestnut High School*



By utilising three subsets within the case, the study was able to investigate patterns present within a year group of students, as well as variables that are common to the phenomenon of the choice to study Music on a wider scale (Creswell, 2015; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). This also allowed concurrent data collection to take place, as the researcher could attend the same site but see a range of participants and classes of interest within the timeframe of engagement.

Chestnut High School follows the NSW State Government education calendar which has four (4) terms each year. There are two weeks of vacation between Terms 1, 2 and 3, with a longer extended break over the Australian summer (December to January). Normal school days at Chestnut High School start at 8:38am and finish at 2:53pm. There are usually six academic class periods of 55 minutes each within a school day. Two of these afternoon periods are dedicated to school-wide sport on a Wednesday afternoon, and one allocated to a school-wide



Assembly on a Thursday morning. Students will attend up to 27 academic class periods per week, completing work and assessments for their various subjects during this time and after school. During Term 1 of each year, the school hosted ‘taster’ and ‘expo’ nights for future students, their parents and students in Year 8 who will have to choose elective subjects for the following year. During these nights, teachers from each subject are given the opportunity to talk to parents and prospective students, setting up a mock classroom of activities to highlight the course and ‘sell’ it to students who may be interested, particularly as an elective. These elective decisions are usually made during Term 2, with choices finalised by Term 3 for subsequent scheduling and timetabling.

The study was conducted at Chestnut High School throughout Terms 1, 2 and 3 of 2018 (late January through to mid-September), which formed the sustained research engagement needed for deep, high quality themes to emerge. Each Term represented a different phase of data collection, which is explained in more detail throughout this chapter.

#### **3.6.5.1 Subset 1: The Year 8 Class Context.**

The Year 8 Music class consisted of 28 students, with an equal distribution of male and female students. All students in Stage 4 (Years 7 and 8) of their education must engage in compulsory subjects of English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Visual Arts, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PHDPE) and Music. Therefore, compulsory Music courses have larger class sizes than elective groups, due to their mandatory nature, requiring all students to undertake the subject whether they would have chosen to or not. Mrs Maple taught three of the five Year 8 Music classes, with Mr Mahogany and other casual teachers taking the others and stepping in to teach her class when she is called away for departmental duties. Year 8 students were allocated three 55-minute Music lessons per fortnight, with students in the focus class having two lessons with Mrs Maple and one with Mr Mahogany in a two-week cycle. Because of these limitations in class availability and lesson frequency, a smaller number of participants was sourced from this age group to maximise the information able to be gathered. It is expected that participation in the Year 8 Music program will help students prepare for the Year 9 content and course, if they were inclined to continue with their Music education (Board of Studies, 2003). It is interesting to note there that at Chestnut High School, there was usually only one Year 9 elective class subsequently formed from the numbers of students interested in choosing Music after Year 8.

#### **3.6.5.2 Subset 2: The Year 9 Class Context.**

The Year 9 Music class began 2018 with 20 enrolled students, which included twelve male, seven female and one gender non-binary student. One female student was known to truant and was absent for the majority of Terms 1 and 2, later being withdrawn from secondary school and enrolled in tertiary education. The family of one male student decided to move halfway through the year, so withdrew from Chestnut High School and enrolled their son in a secondary school closer to their new home. This resulted in a mainstay of 18 students within the elective Year 9 Music program. At Chestnut High School, Year 9 elective students must stay in their chosen courses for the entirety of their 200-hour Stage 5 elective educational experience. This meant students participated in their chosen electives for Year 9 and 10 inclusive and would only swap classes or subjects in extreme circumstances. Such a circumstance occurred for two of the female students in the Year 9 class, requiring them to choose Music as one of the only electives with spaces left open. Both were due to behaviour and attitude clashes in previous elective classes; one with a teacher and the other with fellow student peers. Within a fortnight, there were six 55-minute lessons allocated to Year 9, two of which were concurrent and formed a double period of Music each two-week cycle. All of the Year 9 Music lessons were scheduled on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, giving the researcher multiple opportunities to interview participants and observe a variety of lessons and assignments. This also resulted in more time to interact with a greater number of participants within the age group. The experiences students had in Year 9 and 10 elective courses were aimed at supporting skill development and encouraging a love for Music that could continue into Stage 6 Music courses.

#### **3.6.5.3 Subset 3: The Year 11 Class Context.**

The Year 11 Music 1 class began 2018 with a larger class that began to diminish throughout the year. Of the three Music-specific courses offered by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) as part of the Stage 6 curriculum, only Music 1 and the Life Skills Music courses were available to students at Chestnut High School. It started with thirteen enrolled students: eight males and five females. During Term 1, two female students decided to leave school with one specifically citing a job offer of vocal coaching at her Music school as her reason for withdrawing. Another male student who was generally disruptive and distracted in class withdrew in Term 2 after a disagreement with a teacher in a different subject

and did not make mention of further educational pursuits. This left a Year 11 class of ten students: nine enrolled in the Music 1 course, and one in the Life Skills program.

Music 1 is offered as an entry-level course, with students able to continue from elective Music in Years 9 and 10 or re-join the Music curriculum based on their Year 8 compulsory experiences (Board of Studies, 2009a). This course is designed to be more accessible for a wider range of students, requiring analysis of musical concepts, compositions and performances to complete the HSC examination. Within the core group of nine students that remained in the preliminary Year 11 Music 1 HSC course, there were;

- Two female vocalists (one soprano, one alto)
- One female pianist
- One male drummer and vocalist
- Five male guitarists (two acoustic, three bass)

The Life Skills Music course is offered as an alternative education subject for Stage 6 students wanting to complete the HSC who may be intellectually or physically disabled. This teaches foundational music skills and knowledge including rhythm exercises, listening activities and discussions of sound (Board of Studies, 2009a). One of the male students who remained in the course was participating in the Life Skills program, rather than the traditional HSC course of study due to his intellectual disabilities and was interested in percussion and playing the drum kit.

Within each two-week school timetable, there were nine 55-minute Music lessons allocated to Year 11, two of which were concurrent and formed a double period. Of these, six lessons (including the double period) fell within the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday data collection days. This allowed for more opportunities for the researcher to interact with, interview and observe participants involved.

#### **3.6.5.4 The Shared Teacher Context: Mrs Maple's Context.**

Mrs Maple was one of two specialist Music teachers employed at Chestnut High School. Compulsory Music classes offered in Years 7 and 8 are split between Mrs Maple and her fellow male Music teacher counterpart, Mr Mahogany, while the elective classes are alternatively allocated. This means that Mrs Maple is responsible for teaching half the Year 7 and 8 cohorts,

but the entire elective Music classes for Years 9 and 11 in 2018. Mr Mahogany teaches the other half of the compulsory classes and teaches the Year 10 and Year 12 elective Music students. Each teacher will continue to teach their elective class until they graduate, offering teachers a reprieve every second year from the pressures of the HSC curriculum and process.

As was common in government education, teachers often had more than one role within the school community. Mrs Maple was also the relieving Head Teacher of Student Wellbeing and was scheduled off-class on Fridays to fill this role. For this reason, most of her Music classes timetabled in the latter half of the week were taught by casuals or a Creative Arts relief teacher. Mrs Maple still strives to teach the Year 11 cohort, citing continuity and stability of learning and teaching being paramount in their final years of schooling, as reasons for arranging time out of the relieving Head role to attend to her students.

Although the participants were of particular interest within their respective classes, the context of their learning also must be appreciated to investigate their experiences in situ (Gerring, 2011; Yin, 1994, 2009). The Music teacher was an integral part of this context, remaining the same for all year levels. For this reason, Mrs Maple also took part in the same observations and interviews as the students, to gather her perspectives on academic choices and the behaviour of students. Relevant teacher information sheets and consent forms were provided before the start of data collection to allow for this to take place concurrently (see Appendix F). While Mrs Maple's vignette was created and analysed, her personal experience of Music was not reported on in this study; her insights relating to students were only used to provide further context to the data collected.

### ***3.2.5 Role of the Researcher***

It is important for researchers to understand their own backgrounds and experiences as they may bring prejudices, knowingly or unknowingly, to a topic, which may manifest themselves in the interpretations drawn from the data (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2009; Yin, 2009). As this study is founded on Expectancy Value Theory (EVT), Eccles' adaptations and constructivist principles, the researcher's own experiences must be considered in order to acknowledge any possible bias they may have while conducting data collection and analysis. For this reason, the researcher's own experiences with and choices regarding Music education have been highlighted for any possible influence.

The researcher completed both primary and secondary education at private girl's grammar school in Sydney (NSW), undertaking Music 1, Chemistry, Mathematics (2unit) and English (Advanced, Extension 1 and Extension 2) for the final HSC course of study and examinations. Music education was available to all grades at the school and was taught by specialist teachers in weekly lessons. During the primary years, each class would have two 40-minute classes of formal Music education per week, while this expanded in the secondary years to three 80-minute lessons per fortnight in Years 7 and 8. The researcher also participated in school-based Music ensembles such as bands and choirs, taking voice and flute lessons from in-school tutors, paid for by her parents and a scholarship in Year 8. This was also extended to involvement in stage productions during secondary school, and her continuation with selective choirs until Year 12 graduation. Out of school, the researcher had a musically-inclined home life, with parents who were supportive of musical activities at home and at school. Music was usually playing in the home, due to parental involvement with radio programming. As a result, Music was a source of comfort and stability for the researcher, choosing to be involved for deeper reasons beyond the academic content of the subject. This led the researcher to consider whether the same phenomenon is experienced by current Music students, and the ways they choose to be and stay involved.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

This section discusses the data collection procedures used to gain insight into the choices students make about their involvement in Music education. In line with the qualitative nature of this embedded case study, data was collected during a nine-month engagement at a single NSW public secondary school site. Site visits occurred during Terms 1, 2 and 3 of 2018 in which the researcher attended the scheduled classes for each subset to gather primary and secondary sources related to each participant. Primary sources of data included two semi-structured interviews and a mini-survey to clarify student choices and experiences in relation to Music education. Secondary data sources included observations of classes and the collection of relevant learning documents such as assessment notifications, worksheets and repertoire samples. A total of three (3) participants from Year 8, six (6) participants from Year 9 and five (5) participants from Year 11 returned individual consent forms and were therefore involved in the formal data collection process. Further details about data collection methods are provided in the following sections.

### 3.3.2 Site Visits

The most authentic data is collected during embedded case studies when the researcher is able to attend the site and interact with the participants first-hand (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Cronin, 2014; Eisenhardt, 1989; Gerring, 2011). This allows for the provision of a sustained field engagement in which working relationships are formed with the participants to gather and check data over time. Table 3.1 summarises the approach to data collection onsite at Chestnut High School, during a three Term engagement in 2018.

**Table 3.1.**

#### *Phases of On-Site Data Collection*

Term 1, 2018	Term 2, 2018	Term 3, 2018
Relationship Establishment	Beginning Data Collection	Finalising Data Collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School approached and permission granted</li> <li>• Initial meeting with teacher</li> <li>• Observation and engagement with classes of interest</li> <li>• Identification of potential participants</li> <li>• Approach classes, present study and consent information (returned at start of Term 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent collected for whole class and individual participants</li> <li>• Formal observations and notes begin to be collected</li> <li>• First interviews conducted with each participant</li> <li>• Field notes and documents collected throughout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second interviews conducted with each participant</li> <li>• Final class observations and notes collected</li> <li>• Surveys completed</li> <li>• Teacher interview conducted</li> <li>• Final field notes and documents collected</li> </ul>

Each school Term represented a different phase of the collection process and required the researcher to undertake different tasks to gather appropriate information from participants. Most importantly, Term 1 was used as a relationship establishment phase to get to know the participants, school and teacher before formal data collection began. This also allowed for the identification and recruitment of participants which ensured a smooth transition to initial data collection in Term 2. Term 2 (2018) began the initial phase of data collection which included the first round of interviews with each participant, observations of each subset's Music classes and the collection of relevant learning documents. This was followed by a final data collection phase in Term 3 to conduct follow-up interviews, further observations and document

collection, and to administer a mini-survey to clarify participant choices related to Music education in the following years.

Throughout Term 2 and 3, the researcher attended all scheduled classes on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays to observe, interview and survey participants. This equated to approximately 70 separate site visits across the research engagement. During each visit, the researcher would sign-in to the school, make her way to the Creative Arts department, and follow Mrs Maple to her scheduled classes for Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 throughout the day. The researcher would sit in the back or side of the classroom, taking notes and wandering around to observe student work as necessary. Before the commencement of class, the teacher and researcher would discuss students who needed to be interviewed, or whether the lesson would be formally observed:

- **If needing interviews:** The teacher would signal to the researcher during the class when it was appropriate to withdraw the particular participant for interview, with the researcher and participant sitting in the hall outside the classroom or in an adjacent, spare classroom to complete the interview. Once each interview was complete, other participants would be called until the class time had expired or until the list to interview had been exhausted.
- **If being formally observed:** The researcher and teacher would discuss the content of the lesson, and this would be recorded as the title at the top of the observation protocol. The lesson was then observed, with notes handwritten on the protocol regarding the whole class and individual participants in attendance.

After all classes had been attended for the day, the researcher would leave the site and record any anecdotal information under the relevant participant heading in the 'Student Notes' book. Once all interviews had been completed, and data gathered with the support of formal observations had reached a point of saturation, the researcher continued to attend the site and classes of each subset to finalise the immersion within the student experience. This also acted as a more relaxed conclusion to the data collection period than formal exit interviews or surveys would have allowed.

### **3.3.3 Primary Data Sources**

Two main primary data sources provided the basis of the information from participants about their experiences with and perceptions of Music education. This allowed the researcher to collect insights in the participant's own words, through the administration of interview and survey instruments. Each year group was assigned a coloured folder that was used to store participant consent, printed transcripts and survey responses; Year 8 – Red, Year 9 – Blue, Year 11 – Green. This allowed for the collection and organisation of each participant's physical consent forms and related class documents and formed the basis of the colour coding system applied throughout the data collection process.

#### **3.3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews.**

The fourteen participants and their teacher took part in two approximately 30-minute semi-structured interviews throughout Terms 2 and 3 of the data collection process. Initially, four shorter interviews were planned with each individual, however throughout the course of data collection it was determined that two longer interview sittings was more appropriate in terms of timetabling and continuing the flow of conversation. These were guided by an interview protocol, comprised of 30 open-ended conversational prompts and questions, that supported the participant in their exploration and explanation of their perceptions and experiences related to Music education (see Appendix G) (Bariball & While, 1994; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Whiting, 2008). This interview technique also allowed the researcher to re-question and probe further if participant responses required such, particularly after a classroom observation, assessment or anecdote. This allowed the interview protocol to adapt and change to the needs of each participant. Conducting these discussions as a “conversation around your involvement in Music” rather than an “interview” allowed the participants to feel more at ease with the researcher and generated more authentic insights and discussions than a formal structured interview may have allowed.

The semi-structured interview protocol contained questions that were developed from the four main themes of the GMAC framework (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010);

1. Perceptions of the expectations and attitudes of teachers, peers and parents (PoE)
2. Interpretations and Attributions of Past Experiences (IA)
3. Goals and self-definition (GSD)



#### 4. Task-specific beliefs of self-concept and difficulty (SCD)

Using previous studies, as well as the theory itself to guide questions, a list of 30 conversation prompts were established to use with students. These were coded with the accompanying bracketed theme from the GMAC to keep track of the line of questioning during the interview. Both the teacher and student lists of questions were then printed, cut and re-arranged into a logical flow and sequence for a conversation with the participants, which were included on the protocol document. This provided a basic outline for the interview, but the order of questions was ultimately guided by the conversation of the particular participant, with prompts introduced as they related to what was being discussed. Therefore, the order of the questions changed slightly between participants, while preserving the overall flow of the conversation.

Before each lesson, the researcher and teacher would discuss participants who needed to be interviewed, and the most appropriate timing to do so. Participants were withdrawn from their Music class on advice and with permission of the teacher, usually during a practical lesson so the individual did not miss out on important class content. There was no particular order followed, with the interview process remaining as conversational as possible to support the authentic collection of student opinions and experiences.

Each participant was interviewed twice, with the exception of one participant (Avery) who required three interviews for time restriction reasons beyond the researcher's control. Interviews were audio recorded for later transcription, comparison and analysis purposes, and were conducted in the Creative Arts hallway, or in a spare, adjacent room to the Music classroom currently being occupied by the subset. The first round of interviews were conducted in Term 2, and ran for approximately 30-minutes per participant, with the researcher establishing a conversation with each individual to guide them through the protocol prompts. The second round of interviews were conducted in Term 3, after reviewing the individual's transcript to eliminate prompts that had already been discussed to refine the protocol for each participant down to those questions yet to be answered. Each interview was terminated when either the logical flow of the conversation had ended, all questions had been addressed, or if time restrictions (such as class-time ending) required.

By collecting the data first-hand, the researcher was able to make a personal connection with participants through face-to-face data collection (Bariball & While, 1994; Flick, 2014). This

method also aligns with constructivist and embedded case study principles, which aim to gather first-hand experiences in order to understand the lived realities of participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014, 2015). The insights gained into participants' perspectives and beliefs allowed the researcher to develop a more comprehensive picture of the experiences of students that affect their academic choices of and within Music.

All interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, notated and analysed personally by the primary researcher on site. This provided a more intimate view of the interview data, with notes and knowledge regarding non-verbal cues, emphasis and attitudes adding depth and context. After both interviews had been conducted and transcribed, transcripts were printed and hand-notated before being coded using NVIVO systems (Version 9).

#### **3.3.3.2 Clarifying Questions: Mini-Survey.**

A mini-survey form was created in order to gather clarifying information from participants involved in the study. This took place at the end of the research engagement with the site during Term 3, 2018, and were used as a way to summarise the experiences and choices of students in regard to their Music education. The survey instrument took the form of a three-question paper-based form (see Table 3.3), which was analysed qualitatively to provide insight into the opinions, perceptions and meaning behind participant responses, rather than generate numerical or statistical data. The survey was administered to all students who returned whole class and individual consent forms, with a total of nineteen responses received (three from Year 8, ten from Year 9 and six from Year 11). Some were completed anonymously, while others had names or identifying information included, in which case the data was assigned to a particular participant. In these cases, the data collected also allowed for triangulation and cross-checking of answers with the responses given in interviews, providing consistency, new insights and ideas offered in the students' own words. Each response was stored in the accompanying Subset/Year folder and were filed with the participant's transcript (where known), digitally scanned and uploaded to an internal NVIVO folder to be coded during analysis.

The mini-survey questions required participants to consider their personal conceptions of Music, as well as the reasons for their choices surrounding involvement. Some questions remained consistent across year groups, while others varied according to the choices afforded

to each group. Table 3.2 shows the distribution and wording of mini-survey questions distributed to each year group.

**Table 3.2.**

*Distribution of Mini-Survey Questions across Subsets*

Q	Year 8 (3 responses)	Year 9 (10 responses)	Year 11 (6 responses)
1	What is your definition of ‘music’?		
2	Are you interested in music? Why/why not?	Why did you choose to take music?	
3	Did you choose Music for a Year 9 elective next year? Yes – why? No – why not?	Do you think you will take Music in Year 11 and/or Year 12? Yes – why? No – why not?	Will you take Music next year? Yes – why? No – why not?

### 3.3.4 Secondary Data Sources

Other sources of data were collected that were used to substantiate the student experience and provide practical context for their learning. This was achieved through observation (and the concurrent collection of notes and subsequent anecdotal records) and gathering relevant task and assessment documentation.

#### 3.3.4.1 Observations.

An observatory data collection method allows researchers to appreciate the actions, behaviours and roles of people within the natural context of particular situations (Creswell, 2015; Flick, 2014; Fry et al., 2017). Researchers collect systematic information about occurrences within a situation, giving a more complete and insightful picture than achieved in other data collection methods (Fry et al., 2017; Walshe et al., 2011). In choosing a participant or non-participant approach, researchers establish a relationship with the setting in order to collect verbal data, along with body language, tone and real-life influences from a particular perspective (Atkins & Wallace, 2011; Flick, 2014; Fry et al., 2017).

The researcher acted as a non-participatory observer in this study, trying to capture the true student experience, taking into account the range of factors at play within a classroom context while not being directly involved (Flick, 2014; Fry et al., 2017). This allowed the researcher to question, probe or record responses as necessary without disrupting the actions of the group (Walshe et al., 2011). In this way, the class was able to continue as normal, while the researcher observed, took notes and questioned students as the need arose throughout the observation period.

It is important that objectivity was maintained, particularly while observing in the field. The possibilities for influencing behaviour, resulting in changes to group dynamics or attitudes can be minimised with careful planning and attention given to acknowledging biases and subjectivities prior to commencement (Atkins & Wallace, 2011; Creswell, 2015; Fry et al., 2017). For this reason, the study had a phase of relationship establishment with the prospective student participants and teacher in order to gain a level of mutual respect and authenticity before the commencement of data collection occurred. During this phase, written consent was gained to observe Music lessons for the rest of the research engagement for all students within the focus classes. This advanced consent provided ethical security for the study and its participants, and negated the need for persistent consent signing prior to each lesson (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2009; Given, 2016). However, to ensure the privacy and willingness of students, verbal consent was sought at the start of each observation period, allowing any participants to withdraw at any time throughout the study engagement as necessary (Creswell & Miller, 2009; Fry et al., 2017; Walshe et al., 2011).

An initial set of observations was conducted during the relationship establishment phase in Term 1. Initial impressions were recorded from each Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 classroom to identify a range of possible participants who could help tell their varied stories and experiences of Music education. Impressions included notes about their general attitude, behaviour, comments and opinions gathered through early interactions with the students in each subset classroom.

Observations took place throughout the data collection phases in Terms 1, 2 and 3, in which the researcher attended each of the lessons scheduled for each subset class that fell on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday (as Mrs Maple was usually scheduled off classes on

Thursdays and Fridays). Within these parameters, Year 8 had one scheduled lesson, Year 9 had six (with two back-to-back as a double period) and Year 11 had six (with two back-to-back as a double period) in a fortnight. This meant that the Year 8 subset had fewer observable opportunities than the other two subsets, resulting in a smaller number of notes being taken for this group than for the other two subsets. Throughout the entire data collection period, the total number of lessons engaged with and observed for each subset are shown in Table 3.3. Values are calculated on the total number of scheduled lessons within the collection period, with observable totals listed as approximate values due to some lessons having to be cancelled due to school activities, illness or circumstances beyond the control of the researcher.

**Table 3.3.**

*Class Subset Observations*

	<b>TERM 1</b> (5 available weeks)	<b>TERM 2</b> (10 available weeks)	<b>TERM 3</b> (10 available weeks)	<b>Total Lessons Observed</b> (approx.)	<b>Total Lessons Formally Observed &amp; Noted</b>
<b>Year 8</b> <b>(One lesson per fortnight)</b>	2	5	5	<b>12</b>	2
<b>Year 9</b> <b>(Six lessons per fortnight)</b>	14	30	30	<b>74</b>	4
<b>Year 11</b> <b>(Six lessons per fortnight)</b>	14	30	30	<b>74</b>	14

Although all lessons were observed, formal notes were only recorded in the protocol on a handful of occasions, such as during aural tasks, assessments and discussions (see Appendix H). Some practical lessons were also noted, but since these comprised a large portion of the classes attended by the researcher, once data saturation occurred the note-taking was ceased in favour of observing and interacting with the participants. This allowed the researcher to focus on developing a relationship with the class and participants, and to be immersed in the daily learning and running of the classroom (Flick, 2014; Fry et al., 2017; Walshe et al., 2011). However, written records were kept in the ‘Student Notes’ book when important events, comments or anecdotes occurred. Particular attention was paid to the individual participants

involved in the interviews, however the actions and behaviours of all students within the class were observed. This again helped to provide context for the participant experience and perceptions, providing opportunities to examine for behavioural patterns between participants and other students (Creswell, 2015; Martin, 2000).

The following sections describe the two types of notes collected as a result of observation periods, summarised in Table 3.4. Both sets of notes were used as supporting evidence when developing the vignettes to provide comprehensive details about the individual participant experience.

**Table 3.4.**

*Types of notes collected during Site Visits*

Observation Notes	Reflective Notes
Notes taken during class immersions in protocol notebook	Anecdotal Notes kept in ‘Student Notes’ book
<i>Collected <u>ONSITE</u>, during observation periods</i>	<i>Collected <u>OFFSITE</u>, after site visits</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected during class time</li> <li>• Observed participants during normal class time and for whole-class interactions</li> <li>• Handwritten into an observation protocol notebook, dated, and typed at conclusion of data collection period</li> <li>• Some lesson notes were forgone due to data saturation, school requirements, or in favour of interviewing or interacting with participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recorded immediately after classroom visits, only on occasions of significance or interest for each specific participant</li> <li>• Recorded noteworthy additions to each participants’ experience</li> <li>• Stored under participant headings and dated as a record of anecdotes, ideas and experiences</li> <li>• Added to more regularly than formal observation protocol with extra details or specific participant information</li> </ul>

#### **3.3.4.1.1 Observation Notes.**

During the notated observation periods, records of events and interactions were collected on a handwritten protocol rubric within a notebook. This protocol followed the structure as outlined in Appendix F This method of notation was chosen as handwritten notes were deemed to be the least disruptive and distracting to the flow of the regular classroom, with the researcher sitting to the side or at the back of the room to record observations as necessary. The whole class was observed, while particular attention was paid to participants involved in the interviewing process to gain insight into their practical experiences and interactions within

Music. A total of 20 formal observation periods with accompanying protocol notes were recorded, while reflective notes were recorded anecdotally in the ‘Student Notes’ book after a site visit.

#### ***3.3.4.1.2 Reflective notes.***

Anecdotal notes were taken throughout the course of the data collection period and were handwritten immediately after site visits by the researcher in the ‘Student Notes’ book to record any information or significant events influencing the individual’s experience of Music. Notes were not taken after each visit for every participant, but rather for moments of interest, musings or conversations had with individuals and their teachers, which were dated accordingly to provide alignment with observation notes and interview data. These reflective notes served as a record of incidental happenings between officially recorded observation periods.

#### **3.3.4.2 Document Collection.**

The collection and analysis of relevant documents allow researchers to gain insight into research questions from different perspectives in an immortalised document form (Creswell, 2015; Flick, 2006). These documents allow their authors to express their perspectives in their own words and can act as unobtrusive sources of data collection, as they are already in existence and can be called upon many times throughout the analysis process (Flick, 2014). This study collects unsolicited documents throughout the terms of research engagement at the site, mainly used to support primary data collection and analysis of interviews and surveys (Creswell, 2015; Flick, 2014). Although these sources were not considered part of the dataset or used in the analysis process, they provided context around the structure and design of learning in the classroom.

Copies of assessments, exams, workbooks and handouts were collected to provide context around what students were ‘doing’ in the classroom. This also aided an understanding of the assessments participants were discussing during interviews. While the teacher recorded notes and grades during performance tasks, the subjectiveness of these comments made it difficult to compare between participants. These comments and grades also were not able to reflect the progression, effort and development of students, so specific aesthetic measures of participants’ musical ability were not collected. Rather than focusing on grade-scores or achievement markers, the student attitude towards perceptions of academic achievement were of interest in

this study. For this reason, marks and grades were not collected on each participant, although interviews provided conversational prompts to discuss individual attitudes towards them.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis took place in three distinct phases, each representing different stages of Creswell's qualitative inquiry analysis spiral (Creswell, 2014). This requires researchers to move away from a linear approach and adopt a spiral approach that develops in the complexity of analysis as it revisits different sources throughout the process (Creswell, 2014, 2015). The first phase of preliminary analysis included the annotation and organisation of sources, from which emerged the first set of themes. These themes were revisited and revised throughout subsequent analysis phases. The second phase of analysis saw further data management procedures applied to develop individual participant vignettes. This included thick, rich contextual description of each participant, their experiences of Music education and their choices related to continuing or discontinuing their involvement. The third and final phase of analysis involved a cross-case analysis which compared and contrasted emerging themes between student cases, and with the theoretical framework guiding this study. Each data analysis phase is discussed in further detail below.

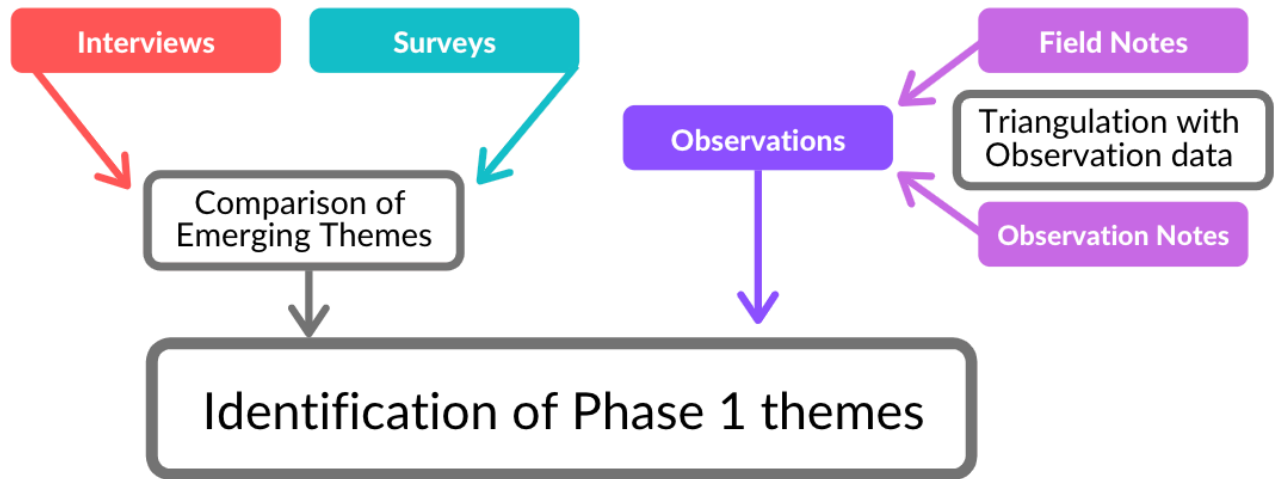
#### ***3.4.1 Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis***

Phase 1 analysis collated, organised and annotated primary and secondary data sources collected during the site engagement. Creswell (2015) proposes that good qualitative analysis should first organise data sources, before getting a sense of the dataset as a whole. As a result, this study dealt with each data source separately to first read, then annotate the source with notes, memos and questions that related to participants' experiences of and choices towards Music education. This provided a form of data management within the study and was an initial way of organising the data by-source to look for emerging themes. Interview data, and responses from the mini-survey forms were used as primary sources of information, while the observation data, notes and documents collected were used to triangulate and contextualise the experiences of participants. During this process, the researcher concluded that the documents collected did little more than provide context for the task discussed with students so was not included in any further analysis. Figure 3.4 shows a visual representation of the approaches taken within Phase 1 to analyse and draw conclusions from the dataset.



**Figure 3.4.**

*Model of Phase 1 Preliminary Data Analysis Procedures*



#### **3.4.1.1 Interviews.**

Good qualitative analysis requires a deep understanding of each data source, before subsequent interpretation, analysis and comparison with other sources of information (Creswell, 2015). In this study, all interviews were transcribed by the researcher, printed, re-read and hand-annotated which helped to develop an initial set of codes to sort responses. Three different types of notes were included on these transcript documents as a way of questioning and reflecting on the data contained within;

1. Annotations on the printed transcript document, using a colour-coding system to distinguish between notes regarding the individual participant and initial impressions of their data (BLUE), and musings relating to the dataset and themes as a whole (PINK).
2. Interesting ideas, quotes and experiences recorded in the 'Student Notes' book, under the name of each specific participant
3. Patterns, emerging themes and generalisable ideas documented in a 'General Notes' book, for musings that related to the entire group

From this annotation process, eight classification codes arose which provided a more comprehensive view of the participants as a group, allowing for organisation and categorisation across the dataset. Each classification code was assigned a number, with sub-codes used to further differentiate between participants. These codes were used to initially group participants in NVIVO, with an accompanying Classification and Description document created to store

the classification code descriptions (See Appendix L). Table 3.5 provides a summary of these codes, subclassifications and descriptions.

**Table 3.5.**

*Summary of Codes, Descriptors and Subclassifications*

Code	Classification Description	Subclassifications
<b>1 – Year Level</b>	Classification of students via their assigned year level (dependent on age and stage of school development)	1.1 Year 8 1.2 Year 9 1.3 Year 11
<b>2 – Gender</b>	Classification of students via their identifying gender, determining use of appropriate pronouns	1.1 Female 1.2 Non-Binary 1.3 Male
<b>3 – Participation</b>	Classification of students via their anticipated future involvement with Music as a subject at school	3.1 Continuing (by choice) 3.2 Continuing (by necessity) 3.3 Discontinuing
<b>4 – Siblings</b>	Classification of students via the number of siblings in their families	4.1 None 4.2 1-2 4.3 3+
<b>5 – Musical Upbringing</b>	Classification of students via their early Music experiences, both at home/outside of school and in primary school	5.1 Early home & school experiences 5.2 Only early school experiences 5.3 No memory of early experiences
<b>6 – Future Career Applicability</b>	Classification of students via their future career choices, and whether or not Music has relevance to this career	6.1 Music-specific career 6.2 Indirect-hobby influence 6.3 No relevance 6.4 Unsure of future career
<b>7 – Musical Self-Concept</b>	Classification of students via their self-beliefs about their own capability and skills in Music	7.1 Good 7.2 Average
<b>8 – Instrument</b>	Classification of students via their choice of instrument to learn and play both in the classroom, and outside of school	8.1 Voice 8.2 Guitar 8.3 Piano/Keyboard

A further data management step was taken here, which developed a set of codes which corresponded with the questions asked during the semi-structured interview and themes emerging from the preliminary annotation of transcripts (see Appendix J). These codes supported the digital coding of each transcript within NVIVO and organisation of data for subsequent analysis phases.

#### **3.4.1.2 Mini-Survey.**

Data from the mini-survey forms which clarified each participant's choices related to Music education was annotated and memoed to further understand the dataset in its entirety before deeper analysis took place in later phases. The mini-surveys were firstly colour coded according to which year group of participants they were completed by, based on the questions included. The questions were highlighted with the corresponding colour for each year (Red – Year 8, Blue – Year 9, Green – Year 11) to enable the data to be visually sorted, and then were physically cut to separate each question. The wording of the questions differed depending on the choice situation of each year, so each cut-up slip was sorted into a corresponding pile with other similar responses:

- Question 1: What is your definition of music?
- Question 2 – Year 8: Are you interested in music? Why/why not?
- Question 2 – Year 9/11: Why did you choose to take Music?
- Question 3: Will you take Music next year? Yes/No – why?

Each group of answers were analysed separately and sequentially, with the responses within each group compared to highlight common themes or words used by each respondent. These commonalities were tallied into a hand-written table to record recurring ideas, phrases and words used in each survey response alongside quotes and the eventual calculation of numerical figures to display the prominence of each theme within the dataset. After each group of responses were analysed for common patterns, a table created was examined to establish a series of themes and sub themes that had emerged. These were compiled into a digital table containing descriptors that were imported into NVIVO for coding and organisation purposes (see Appendix K).

#### **3.4.1.3 Interview and survey code comparison.**

This step of the analysis process involved comparing codes between the interview and survey data to compare and collate initial themes that emerged from the analysis. Nodes from the preliminary interview set and survey set were compared to identify patterns and overlaps in information. Seven common themes were identified, while another (teacher relationship) was only prominent in the interview dataset [at this stage]. These are listed below in order of the most to least related nodes shared between each dataset;

1. Engagement

2. Interest
3. Personal Identity
4. Enjoyment
5. Teacher Relationship (in interviews but not discussed in survey responses)
6. Choice
7. Previous Experience
8. Future Relevance

As a result of the initial thematic comparison, data suggested that engagement, interest, personal identity and enjoyment had an effect on the subject choice of every participant, while the teacher relationship, provision of choices, previous experiences and future relevance were discussed by fewer participants. Preliminary analysis suggested that these latter four themes had differing influences of subject choice, depending on the individual.

#### **3.4.1.4 Observations.**

Data collected from observations, including observational and reflective notes, were revisited and reviewed as a final step within the preliminary analysis of sources. All information collected was re-read and annotated, with a post-it memo kept of recurring words, ideas and patterns to help identify emerging themes (Creswell, 2014, 2015). Descriptors for each theme were developed to define the type of data included under each code heading. The main themes that emerged from this set and stage of the data analysis were

1. Task avoidance
2. Teacher behaviour management
3. Learning support and guidance
4. Engagement and participation

From this initial set of four themes, the researcher returned to the observation data to search for patterns and links to develop a visual representation of the relationships between identified variables. Two main behaviours emerged relating to disengagement in Music education (Boredom & Task Avoidance) while four emerged relating to continued, quality participation (Enjoyment, Engagement, Interest & Challenge).

#### **3.4.1.5 Phase 1 themes identified.**

To conclude the preliminary phase of data analysis, initial themes from all datasets were compiled and compared, with some overlaps and connections beginning to emerge. By combining these sources, interpretations were made about how students are making choices regarding their ongoing involvement in Music education. The emergent themes from this preliminary analysis phase represent a cycle of participation, in which students that are involved find Music enjoyable, interesting, engaging and challenging. These broader themes are elaborated by variables and factors within:

- Enjoyment: past experience, early upbringing, flow & satisfaction, learning environment
- Interest: task specific choice and input, teacher relationship, personal identity & intrinsic value
- Engagement: purpose for learning, learning behaviours, self-definition from combined other factors
- Challenge: future relevance & applicability, teacher support, task design & difficulty, skill level (real & perceived)

The factors that emerged from this preliminary analysis phase were used to help organise and categorise information to be included in the creation of the participant vignettes. Themes were used to guide the progression of the participant's story, to make sure that all elements of the student experience were included in their final vignette.

#### ***3.4.2 Phase 2: Data Compilation and Vignette Creation***

The second phase of data analysis involved the re-organisation of data into specific participant cases, and using this information to develop thick, rich descriptions in the form of a vignette (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2009). Datasets from the preliminary analysis phase were collected and organised by-participant to compile information about their specific experiences with and choices in relation to Music education. Participant data was re-read and organised using the emergent thematic categories from the preliminary analysis. This was to ensure that each aspect of student choice was covered, and to draw later comparisons between cases.

##### **3.4.2.1 Vignettes.**

As a result of the preliminary analysis phase and the emergent themes, thick, rich case descriptions were created for each student participant, detailing the relationships between

factors influencing their Music-related choices. These were referred to as the participant vignettes that captured the stories and experiences of the students involved, using researcher descriptions and direct quotes to form each document. Each participant's vignette was constructed one-by-one, allowing the researcher to explore the experiences of each individual deeply before moving to the next vignette. Emergent themes from the preliminary analysis phase were used as sub-headings when each participants' data was being reviewed, with notes and quotes recorded under each. Relevant data was then collected from each data source to form the participant's story, stored as bullet points in an individual word document for each participant with a brief description provided for later alignment and retrieval in the writing phase. The data sources and methods of collection are described in further detail:

- The notated versions of interview transcripts (from the raw data analysis in phase 1) were reviewed and read from start to finish, with significant quotes and ideas copied into the participant's document.
- Where identifiable, survey responses were reviewed for quotes or additional information that could be used to tell the story of the particular participant and included in their document.
- Observational and field notes were reviewed for any anecdotes or additional information related to the participant and were included in the document.

The theme headings that emerged from preliminary analysis were logically organised to tell a sequential story of the individual participant's experience with Music education. For example, a participant may have discussed their experience with Music teachers in primary school, while another focused on the teaching of Mrs Maple in secondary school. For this reason, each participant's thematic headings were ordered in such a way as to respect and highlight their unique experiences, relationships and interactions that influence their choices and behaviours in Music. After the headings were ordered, the quotes, anecdotes and ideas under each were reviewed (with the sequence changed as necessary) to ensure the logical flow of the story continued from point to point. Descriptive sentences were then added between each point to link ideas together, provide context and manage the overall direction of the story/vignette. Parts of quotes, whole quotes, reflective and observational notes and survey data (where available) were all incorporated to form a comprehensive case description for each individual participant. Full participant vignettes developed during this phase of analysis range between 7-21 pages in total. For this reason, shorter one-page summaries of the most pertinent participant information

has been included in Chapter 4 to provide the reader with a picture of each student involved in the study. Each vignette was member checked by participants to ensure accuracy of the data included and authenticity in representing their experience (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2009; Flick, 2014).

### ***3.4.3 Phase 3: Cross-Case Analysis***

Conducting a cross-case analysis on data collected for this study allowed for the comparison, contextual interpretation and representation of patterns across the various cases involved (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2009). Once data has been annotated, categorised and described in previous phases, a cross-case analysis helps to provide an overview of the patterns emerging within the study (Creswell, 2015). In this study, cross-case analysis took place in two different forms; an inductive comparison between student cases, and a deductive comparison to Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework. This section describes how the individual vignettes created in the second phase of data analysis have been compared to first provide insight into patterns affecting student involvement in Music education and give qualitative detail to the application of the GMAC to a Music context.

#### **3.4.3.1 Inductive Comparison of Student Cases**

Categorical aggregation was used here to collect data related to each theme from the preliminary analysis from each participant within a visual structure, to allow meaning and patterns to emerge. A spreadsheet was created to compile and categorise data from the respective vignette sources regarding each theme identified in the preliminary analysis phase:

- Teacher
- Peers
- Challenge
- Enjoyment
- Engagement
- Future Relevancy
- Interest

Participant names were included as rows, and each theme heading was assigned a column. The data was analysed in three separate passes, which aimed to condense the ideas and elevate the level of thinking further away from the raw data each time. Firstly, each vignette was re-read and edited to include any comments from the member checking process [although none were

noted]. Descriptive summary notes were recorded in the 'Pass 1' tab of the spreadsheet, which included quotes and secondary analysis ideas from the researcher. The second pass of this data involved reducing the summarised notes into brief overviews of researcher interpretation, without the inclusion of participant quotes. The third pass consolidated these further into brief thematic phases of 1-5 words that could be compared for patterns. The resulting spreadsheet contained three tabs (labelled 'Pass 1', 'Pass 2' and 'Pass 3' respectively), with the highly processed interpretations in Pass 3 used to identify patterns within each larger thematic category. Pass 3 notes were re-read one theme at a time, and key phrases, words or ideas that recurred were recorded in a comparison table. As each participant's notes were read, tallies were awarded against each recurrent idea. These ideas were examined and compared to look for any categories that could be formed. Each emergent category was given a descriptive name and became sub-themes within the larger thematic heading. The ideas and phrases within each sub-theme were referred to as indicators.

The themes, sub-themes and indicators from the Pass 3 data analysis were used to develop a Qualitative Thematic Pattern Analysis table (see Appendix L), which included a table with separate rows for each sub-theme, and a column to display specific participant data relating to each theme. A column was also created for the number of participants who shared the same theme or indicator, providing some overarching quantitative statistics to incorporate. A separate row was also included under each main theme for summative and descriptive notes that comprehensively pulled together the significant ideas that emerged throughout the analysis of the specific theme. Using this table, descriptive paragraphs were created to explain each theme, subtheme and related data to each indicator. This was a way of representing the interpretations and analysis that occurred during the cross-case analysis phase of the study (Creswell, 2015), and forms the body of Chapter 5.

After the creation of descriptive paragraphs that explored each emergent theme, the researcher used a post-it note to summarise three significant points that arose from the participant data related to each theme. Once these post-it summaries were complete, a relational matrix diagram between variables was drawn for each theme on a separate post-it and stapled together to represent each theme. These high-level summaries were used to represent links between themes which applied across the dataset and explored how each factor contributed to the overall choice of students in Music education.



#### **3.4.3.1 Deductive Comparison to Eccles' theory**

Cross-case analysis calls for emergent themes to be analysed before comparison of these with a thematic framework to allow meaning to emerge from the data before interpretations are applied (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2009). At this stage within the study, Eccles' (1983) theory was revisited in order to refresh the researcher about what each group of variables affecting academic choice contained, and how they connected with the other variables identified in previous theoretical and research literature. Summaries from previous analysis phases were re-examined and re-organised into a new spreadsheet containing each participant and columns for each GMAC variable:

1. Perceptions of socialiser's attitudes and expectations
2. Past experiences and attributions
3. Goals and self-definition
4. Task-specific beliefs

After the data from all participants had been sorted, each column was summarised using dot points onto a post-it to gain an overall sense of the relationships and patterns emerging. These summaries formed the basis for descriptive paragraphs, developed to explore relationships between data collected and Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework. A plan for describing each GMAC element was developed, which took into account the components from the original theory as well as the themes that emerged within the data. During this planning phase, some data was recognised as being better represented in a table format. These tables were developed prior to writing commencing and were unpacked and updated as necessary throughout the writing process. The subsequently created paragraphs contained data and explanations that aligned the findings of this study with the framework from the original theory. Participant examples were utilised to demonstrate further connections between themes and factors identified in each. These descriptive paragraphs and summative tables form the basis for Chapter 6.

### **3.6 Credibility and Reliability**

The credibility and reliability of a study and its associated data involves demonstrating how the research practices and analysis methods are plausible, consistent and of good integrity (Creswell & Miller, 2009; Flick, 2014; Given, 2016). This aligns with qualitative, constructivist and case study principles that guide this study and its methodology (Cronin, 2014). Three

strategies to support the trustworthiness of this study include sustained field engagement, triangulation of data sources and thick, rich descriptions.

### ***3.6.1 Sustained Field Engagement***

Participating in prolonged and repeated interactions within the field not only develops a rapport which helps the researcher to elicit authentic responses from participants, but also builds an in-depth view of the case and relevant subsets over time (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Creswell & Miller, 2009). The 9-month research engagement during Terms 1, 2 and 3 of 2018 demonstrated this sustained immersion within the context being studied, providing the researcher with a greater understanding of participant experiences. This also helped to account for any variances or changes in the academic choices of students, with the researcher able to recast and observe factors that may have influenced these changes (Creswell & Miller, 2009; Flick, 2014; Martin, 2000).

### ***3.6.2 Triangulation***

Data triangulation involves gathering information from multiple sources to check for theme agreement used during analysis and coding practices, and is a hallmark of quality case study research (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Cronin, 2014; Flick, 2014). This convergence of information adds to the data's credibility, as a combination of collection methods help to describe the same phenomena from a range of perspectives (Burton et al., 2008). This in turn increases the scope for interpreting the data, illuminating the number of variables and influencing factors within the main, complex issue (Cronin, 2014).

To ensure depth, quality and trustworthiness of data, collection was conducted over two school terms (Terms 2 and 3, 2018), with the initial phase of relationship establishment occurring in Term 1, 2018. The length of this engagement not only ensured the quality and comprehensive nature of the data gathered, but also allowed for time to reach saturation, where no new information was found. By using interview transcripts, survey forms, observational and reflective notes, along with any sources that emerged during the collection process (such as documents collected), the researcher could examine for common themes and links throughout the data set.

The approaches taken in the data analysis phases to compare emerging themes at various stages also helped to triangulate findings and check for consistency within the interpretations and conclusions being drawn. The data analysis process was conducted in two phases, in which the themes from each were compared to determine any contrasting or conflicting information that emerged within each stage. This also helped to triangulate the interpretations being drawn from the dataset and examine the data in a multi-layered approach to produce the highest quality conclusions.

### ***3.6.3 Thick, Rich Description***

Providing detail about the setting, participants and themes in rich detail supports the audience and field in understanding the context in which the study was carried out, as well as the significance of its findings (Creswell & Miller, 2009). This detailed reporting is present in the contextual information gathered about each subset, as well as the case descriptions (vignettes) developed for each participant once their individual data had been thematically analysed and collated. By providing this heightened level of detail, able to be collected through sustained engagement and collecting multiple sources of data, the audience can be transported to the context of the learning taking place (Creswell, 2014, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2009). This aids in understanding why certain choices were made regarding Music education that affect the persistence and achievement of students in relation to the tasks, opportunities and experiences offered.

### ***3.6.4 Member Checking***

Vignettes were read, edited and commented on by each participant to check the accuracy of interpretations and to ensure the authenticity of the student voice in a process known as member checking (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2009; Flick, 2014). Once all vignettes had been created, the researcher contacted the teacher participant who organised (at their convenience) another site visit with each of the subset classes. In these visits, each participant was given a printed copy of their individual transcript and a pen and were asked to comment on places where the written experience differed from how they would describe it themselves. This process also allowed participants to read how their data had been collated to form a picture of each individual, and to clarify details, confirm elective choices and enrolment intentions and establish gender and pronoun-use understanding for each participant.

Each participant read through their vignette, with no significant changes noted apart from clarifications such as between maternal or paternal grandparents, number of siblings or the years a particular school was attended. These details were updated, before all identifiable information (student, teacher and school names) were removed and replaced with pseudonyms before completing further analysis steps with the vignette data.

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter detailed the research methods, design and approaches used to investigate the student choice of Music education within the study. To begin, the research design, approaches and frameworks that guide the study were presented, including ethical considerations. The GMAC was also discussed as a theoretical model used in the study to help understand the range of and relationship between factors influencing student subject choice. Data collection procedures were then outlined, identifying methods of onsite data collection along with detailed descriptions of primary and secondary data sources used in the analysis. Discussion of the three phases of analysis were presented, accompanied by the various sources used at each step. To conclude the chapter, an outline of the credibility and reliability approaches was provided to support the quality of the investigation. A description of the sustained field engagement, triangulation, thick, rich description and member checking that took place was also provided.

The next three chapters will present the results of the study, beginning with vignettes of each participant case involved in the study, and their choices related to Music education. The following chapter will then discuss the emergent case themes, before the third results chapter explores the cross-case analysis that took place. These three chapters will then be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis to connect findings with theory, previous studies and provide areas of future investigation.

## 4 Case Vignettes

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study in the form of individual participant vignettes, created from the primary and secondary data sources collected. First, a summary of each participant involved in the study is provided in table form to give a general overview of their contexts. This is followed by one-page versions of the longer vignettes used in the data analysis process to develop an insight into the experiences and choices of each participant, before data is analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.

#### *4.1.1 Summary of Participants*

Table 4.1 provides a summary of participants from the study, and variables of interest in their experience of Music education (see next page).

**Table 4.1**

*Summary of participants and general demographic information*

Name	Year	Siblings		Musical Involvement		Participation in Formal, School Music		Subjects taken	Future Aspirations & Interests
		<i>Brother</i>	<i>Sister</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Private Lessons</i>	<i>Stage 5 (Elective)</i>	<i>Stage 6 (HSC-level)</i>		
<b>Annie</b>	8	1 Younger	1 Younger	Keyboard	Never	No	No	Compulsory Stage 4 subjects	Architect
<b>Jasmine</b>	8	1 Older	-	Keyboard	Never	No	No	Compulsory Stage 4 subjects	Hairdressing
<b>Carly</b>	8	-	2 Older	Keyboard	Never	No	No	Compulsory Stage 4 subjects	Videography
<b>Avery</b>	9	1 Older	1 Older	Ukulele & voice	Not currently	Yes	Yes	Music, Elective History, Commerce	Law degree or “something that helps people”
<b>Alice</b>	9	1 Older	1 Younger, 1 Older	Keyboard	Never	Yes	No	Child Studies, Music, Cooking	Childcare and “starting a family”
<b>Holly</b>	9	3 Younger	1 Younger, 1 Older	Keyboard	Never	Yes	No longer in school	Cooking, Sport, Music	Childcare or writer
<b>Liam</b>	9	- Only Child -		Piano & Guitar	Yes	Yes	Yes	PASS, Music, Cooking	Travelling Musician
<b>James</b>	9	1 Older	1 Older	Keyboard	Never	Yes	11 - Yes 12 - No	Elective History, Sport, Music	Military - Army
<b>Max</b>	9	1 Older	-	Guitar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Elective History, Photography, Music	Music industry professional
<b>Dean</b>	11	1 Younger, 1 Older	-	Guitar	Never	Yes	Yes	Music 1, Visual Art, Society & Culture, Business Studies, Advanced English, Retail (cert. 3)	Business or marketing degree
<b>Grace</b>	11	-	1 Younger	Piano	Not currently	Yes	Yes	Chemistry, Physics, Advanced English, 2U & Ext 1 Maths, PDHPE, Music 1	Physiotherapy, osteo-therapy or Sports Science degree
<b>Jenna</b>	11	-	1 Younger	Voice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advanced English, General Maths, Business Studies, PDHPE, Music 1, Entertainment	Music industry professional, Sports Science degree or Military - Navy
<b>Isiah</b>	11	2 Younger	-	Guitar	Never	No	Yes	Business studies, Timber, Standard English, General Maths, Food Technology, Music 1, Timber	Yet to decide
<b>Mira</b>	11	1 Older	1 Older	Voice	Never	Yes	Yes	English Advanced, Entertainment, Music 1, Society & Culture, Modern History, Business	Music industry professional or Journalism

## 4.2 Vignette Summaries

This section presents summaries of each student participant involved in the study, developed from the individual vignettes. Quotes that support participant descriptions of themselves or their experiences of Music have been included and may be repeated within the presentation of themes in Chapter 5 where pertinent or significant to understanding student choice. In alignment with the nature of embedded case study research which keeps the participant voice at its core, it is hoped that the thick, rich description provided here will give insight into the choices of each participant and their experiences across the study duration in relation to Music education. Details of each participant's relationship with Music, their subject choices, career aspirations and specific decisions related to continuing engagement are discussed and grouped by year subset and presented in alphabetical order. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to refer to participants, peers, teachers and other schools mentioned during data collection.

### 4.2.1 Annie (Year 8)

Annie was a self-described forward-thinker and future planner, who “love[d] the art area. I love to dance. I love to create art and all that, and then I love building stuff and painting cause when I’m older I wanna be an architect or interior designer”. The eldest of three siblings, Annie would not describe her family as musical “but they’re still very creative” with her father working as an accountant and her mother as a designer for a retail surf brand. She was very close with her main group of four friends who all had different creative interests like Drama, Visual Arts and Photography. When asked if she would take an elective subject to be with her friends, she replied “I would still think about it, but I would probably go with something that helps me in the future, not now, that I probably won’t have to do when I’m older”. This showed the slight influence her friends had, yet the power of her individual interests and identity to stay true to her convictions. When asked about her memories of Music from primary school, Annie could not recall any specific lessons but explained how her Year 3 teacher would use songs to support classroom management; “You’d play it, go out, get all your stuff, get them on the desk and be settled by the end of the song. Even though it was a really annoying song in the end, we still loved it”. This lack of specific primary Music exploration and education, along with a non-musical family background, led to high school being the first time Annie experienced a formal Music lesson. These experiences had so far been with Mrs Maple for the last two consecutive years, supplemented by Mr Mahogany and other casual teachers. Annie described a strong

teacher relationship which supported her day-to-day enjoyment and engagement with Music, stating:

I love Mrs Maple. She's the best Music teacher ever ... I can come from her perspective, she just makes it more fun. With other teachers, they just say 'You have to do this' and that's it. They don't really give you any guidance to become better, where Mrs Maple does.

Annie described Music as “one of the classes I can come to and just play some music, calm down after having some crazy Maths or [social] drama or things going on. It's one of those relaxing classes”. This indicated her intrinsic enjoyment of Music as “an area where I can escape from anything”. Despite this, Annie sees herself as an average student and “wouldn't consider [her]self musical...I put music on every morning and all that but it's not like the main priority and thing on my mind”. Clearly, Music was not Annie's favourite subject, nor what she perceived to be the most important subject, simply stating “it is not a dream I want to pursue when I'm older”. Hoping to one day become an Interior Designer and Architect, she chose to spend her energy, focus, and time on subjects that were directly related to this career prospect. Her final Year 9 elective choices included Business Studies “cause I thought it would be great to learn a bit about commerce and how to grow in the world with your business”, again indicating the significant role utility value plays in her choice process. Annie explained that she did not perceive Music as a priority for the architectural field, which impacted her perceptions of the usefulness and importance of Music-related skills. By prioritising other subjects over Music, Annie was able to focus on developing skills and understandings that have direct relevance to her personal identity and future goals.

#### ***4.2.2 Carly (Year 8)***

Carly described herself as “a tom-boy kind of, slash girl-ier”, and was enthusiastically involved in soccer outside of school. She came from a supportive family with two older sisters, one who “just turned 18 and is really good at singing” and the other who wanted to be a teacher. Carly also had her own YouTube channel for vlogs and videogames, which her parents share and were very proud of. When asked if they had any expectations of her, Carly replied:



... they're just interested in us behaving. When you go home and go 'I got an A in Music' and they're like 'That's really good'. But they're happier when you get an A in maths cause you need maths in life.

This implies the influence of parental perspectives, along with the development of opinions regarding the usefulness of skills and knowledge to long-term goals. Carly also described the influence of her peers, expressing that she wanted to use her YouTube channel to gather the opinions of her audience on her musical talent and ability;

I don't want to do something that I'm not good at. I wanna find something. If I were to put a vote as in like 'Yes or No' and it was most 'Yes' then I would keep singing. But if it was like a 'No', I would probably keep it to myself.

Although Carly only remembered general choir experiences from primary school, her exposure to the piano in Year 7 helped to establish initial interest and enjoyment; "I feel like before we played the piano, I didn't like [it] cause I didn't know anything. But now we love the piano ... we get so excited and start singing when we come". Although she had a keyboard in the home growing up, "I didn't really use it that much so we got rid of it" but has since described wanting a new one to practice what is being learnt in class. Carly emphasised that "when you're practicing, it's actually getting you somewhere", extending into her preference of practical tasks in class. Carly found Music innately interesting and enjoyable, but noted a difference between the classes taught by Mrs Maple who "helps us a lot" and Mr Mahogany who "yells a lot". When asked if she would still be interested in Music if Mr Mahogany was the only teacher, Carly responded "yes, I would, but ... yes and no. I feel like he's just a teacher that makes us write stuff", playing into her practical enjoyment of Music.

As Carly approached the time to make elective choices, she expressed links between her enjoyment of different subjects and the significance she perceived they will have on her future life. She explained how she was "not a big fan of maths but it does help you a lot in life ... I like language but I feel like it's not really taking you anywhere, whereas the other [subjects], you actually need them". Despite enjoying Music, her main interests revolved around "sport and art". Carly discussed initial intentions to enrol in elective Music, although this did not eventuate, with Drama, Photography and Child Studies chosen instead. These were connected to personal measures of interest and enjoyment, along with her perception of Music's

usefulness within her own life and to future goals. Carly explained that taking Music was more important “if you wanna be a Music teacher, or you wanna be someone that goes on ‘The Voice’ or something.”

#### *4.2.3 Jasmine (Year 8)*

Jasmine was an enthusiastic student with a creative inclination, drawn to subjects such as Drama, Art, English and sport. She “definitely” classed Music as one of her favourite subjects along with “English, the drama part of English”. The rigidity and formal structure of the Maths classroom however, led this to being her least enjoyable subject. She described not being “a fan of Maths”, but understood that “it helps you”. When asked what subjects she would consider taking and those she would drop, she explained that “if it’s like Maths or something, I would have to do it”. This was founded on a personal expectation to gather skills and content which she deemed important for her future life beyond school. However, she discussed with the researcher feelings of being torn between her interest in the Creative Arts (particularly Music and Drama) and her affinity for sport and soccer. She believed that the two skills were related, but could be a reason for friends to judge or question her choices; “I think sport and Music are kind of really different and I like both, it’s just [my friends] might not think that”.

Jasmine has one older brother who has a keen interest in Music. He is currently enrolled in Mr Mahogany’s Year 10 elective Music class. Her brother’s experience of Music was influential to Jasmine’s future selection as an elective, as she pondered “maybe if he doesn’t like it, I won’t like it but I’m still gonna do it and just see”. This optimistic outlook allowed her to make decisions and choices that align best with her needs and personal interests.

While she had “never done Music outside of school”, Jasmine “used to do Drama” as an extra-curricular activity and trained regularly with her soccer team. Jasmine only had patchy memories of Music in primary school, mainly recalling “choir. And we weren’t really harmonising. It was just like, everyone singing at once”. Her first real exposure to Music was through the compulsory Year 7 and 8 classes at Maple High School, which ignited an interest in playing the piano. Jasmine enjoys Music and is always excited to come to class; “Every time we come to Music, I’m always like ‘Oh! We have Music!’ and I always say I’m gonna pick it as an elective every time we have it. I don’t know why”. This inability to put into words what exactly it is about Music she finds so exciting hinted at her intrinsic interest in forms of creative

expression. She prefers practical activities, explaining that “other than playing the instruments, we just write stuff down. We do learn stuff from it but sometimes it’s a bit too much as we like to play”. She described how “sometimes we get tasks to do or we get to choose” and believes that “when you’re actually **doing** something, you might learn more than when you’re just listening to it, cause it’s like you’re interacting [with it]”.

Jasmine found that the teacher made a difference in how she interpreted the content and enjoyed the lesson, making a clear distinction between the approaches and effectiveness of Music teachers she had encountered. She also identified that classroom management varied greatly between teachers, with some opting to “argue with the people so it makes the lesson longer and we don’t get to play”. Her three Music lessons are split between Mrs Maple and Mr Mahogany, giving her insight into both teaching styles. Jasmine preferred Mrs Maple who is “calm and makes it a better lesson” as compared to Mr Mahogany who “doesn’t teach us, he is teaching himself”. She described feeling confused, distracted and uncertain about what Mr Mahogany expected from his students and of the lesson, when compared to the clear learning intentions Mrs Maple provides. She described how Mr Mahogany “used to teach my Art class too and cause he was a Music teacher, he wasn’t very into Art. He didn’t know how to do clay”. She believed that a person’s perception of difficulty was linked with their interest and desire to participate; “it depends on what you’re playing and I think you actually have to like what you’re playing”. While she did not find Music particularly difficult and has a high level of intrinsic interest, she remained unsure about whether she would continue with the elective subject.

Jasmine had not yet decided on a single career path, but had interests in the videography field. To match these aspirations, Jasmine chose elective subjects of Photography, Drama and Cooking. When asked whether she would consider Music as a subject, Jasmine explained that “it depends ... how much you want it, and how much you wanna do Music when you’re older for a job or something”. It was the relevancy of a subject’s knowledge and skills to future goals that allowed Jasmine to make a judgement on the usefulness to herself, and choices about continuing participation.

#### **4.2.4 Alice (Year 9)**

Alice was a sociable student who “just like[d] being around people” and enjoyed the comfort and support her family provided her. Alice had been raised by her grandparents due to per

parents and older half-siblings getting into “bad stuff”. She also had a younger sister who she did not get to see very often for a range of familial reasons beyond her control. During early research phases in Term 1, 2018, Alice was only sporadically present at school due to a family tragedy. After noticing her struggling to remain focused on a practical keyboard playing task, Alice remarked that she was worried as her grandfather had gone into hospital. While she and Mrs Maple both noted that this was routine day surgery and that there should be nothing to worry about, upon returning the next week for observations Mrs Maple revealed that Alice’s grandfather had unexpectedly passed away from surgical complications. She remembered her grandfather as musical; “he played the guitar. He was in a band when he was younger, I think it was a Latin-American one...they played all that at weddings and things”. Now, Alice lived with her grandmother and the school helped support the family with additional fee- and uniform-help wherever required.

Throughout her short high school Music education career, Alice had “about five different teachers for Music” which she believed could “definitely” become confusing for students. Their varied approaches to classroom management reflected that “some teachers can’t really control the class ... they just get so angry so quick, which makes students lose respect”. Alice recalled that it was during Year 8 that “we got to play the keyboard, I really enjoyed that” during Music class and brought this passion home to practice and invest further in her skills. Her grandmother helped her purchase a keyboard to practice as a result, and “every day I’d come home and play ... I found it really enjoyable and I thought it was fun. I enjoyed being able to play songs that I liked, but then this year I just ... gave up I guess”.

When asked why she chose to take Music as a subject, Alice responded “because I’m interested in music and songs ... I love listening to music, and I love singing”. Alongside Music, Alice also was enrolled in elective “Child Studies, which is my favourite [subject] and Cooking”. Her choice of subjects was derived from personal interest and a perception of usefulness, explaining that “Child Studies was definitely first on the list cause I’ve been interested in working with kids for ages now ... I wanna cook cause it will be with me for my whole life and Music was just an interest I had”. Alice highlighted a strong dislike of science-related subjects, seeing topics as irrelevant, pointless and “nothing I’m interested in”. She emphasised that the difficulty of the concepts, along with “not really” finding any use for this information in her life made her want to disengage from science.

When asked about her intentions for taking Music in Year 11 and 12, Alice explained how her choice would be dependent on her enjoyment and achievement of related goals; “I really wanted to learn how to read music. That was my main thing. Well, I actually only started two days ago. Miss showed me”. She expressed difficulties she had memorising the placement of the notes on the stave, along with the duration of that note which made reading music a particularly steep personal learning curve. This culminated in an uncertain future choice of Music, stating that she was “in the middle. I’m learning what I wanted to learn so I’m more happy with Music”. Alice also described a low self-concept and perception of skill in Music; “I don’t really mind if I’m at a ‘sound’ level of Music because I don’t expect anything more. I just don’t think I’m very good, so I already assumed that I’m gonna get the marks I get”. When asked if she saw herself using any of the skills or knowledge she had gained in Music later in life, Alice responded “probably not ... it’s probably not a good attitude but I think, well ‘What’s the point in learning this if I’m never going to use it in life?’ but then other people would use it”.

#### ***4.2.5 Avery (Year 9)***

During early phases of data collection, the researcher noticed teachers using the name “Bella” whilst peers were referring to the participant as “Avery”. This prompted further clarification from the researcher, with Avery requesting the use of gender-neutral pronouns (they/their) or their name during communication. Upon return for member-checking procedures, Avery informed the researcher of his new preference of male-pronouns (him/his), which have been used throughout his vignettes accordingly.

Avery sees himself as a multifaceted person who is “not really good at reading social cues and figuring out what other people are thinking”. He is a quiet, yet musically confident student who enjoyed creatively inclined subjects, both inside of school and out. At home, Avery listened to music, “watch[ed] a lot of YouTube, I write stories” and had recently “started writing a couple of songs myself”, applying the ‘play-building’ process learnt in extra-curricular Drama classes. He had a very supportive family who attended musical and dramatic performances and helped to financially back his involvement and instruments. Avery described his parents as relatively musical people, with both mother and father participating in some form of singing during their lives; “my mum was a soprano and she trained herself down to go into alto” and “my dad was

an opera singer” who gave up his professional career to have a family. As the youngest of three siblings, Avery explained that only his eldest sister was not musical, while his older brother in Mrs Maple’s Year 11 Entertainment class played both electric and acoustic guitar and “always has it plugged into an amp on full volume”. Like Avery, he is mostly self-taught but “he’s more into doing the backstage things than being on stage. He’s more of one of those people who would rather you know, do the backstage things. Use electrical equipment rather than be on front stage”.

Avery had fond memories of recorder and choir in primary school, with the conductor later becoming his vocal teacher and the director of the Music camp. Avery has also had experience playing the clarinet and the piano in primary school, and now focuses on developing his vocal and ukulele skills. Despite only playing for a year after being introduced through a workshop at South Coast Music Camp, Avery was self-motivated to learn more and would find the ukulele chords for all songs provided in Music classes. Avery had attended this camp for four years including the 2018 program and had recently been approached to perform in a band after a group of friends watched their performance in the school’s merit assembly. In addition to his musical activities outside of school, Avery participated in extra-curricular Drama classes which involved a group of similar-aged and interested students working together on scripts and performances. Attending Drama and singing lessons became a financial burden on the family “so then I had to pick one, and I chose drama...I like Music because of the control but I like Drama because of the freedom”. Avery now prefers to “teach myself” both singing and ukulele through watching YouTube videos and downloading specialised TAB scores.

Avery perceives himself as “better than average”, disclosing “I came top of my class last year for the last report”. He explained a deep love and affinity for Music, emphasising “I really love Music...I don’t know what else that I would be doing. It’s a way for me to, you know, get out emotion, I guess”. Avery perceived Music itself as important, but also expressed how learning Music supported engaging and connecting with people throughout life; “doing well in Music for that exact reason, [it] helps you learn how to make people happy and find peace”. Avery made it clear that they wanted to continue with their Music education for Year 10, 11 and 12, providing justification around the relaxing atmosphere and ability to reset within the Music classroom; “I got elective History, Commerce and Music. I really like History and Commerce. It’s just you know, Music is just something where I can actually get my thoughts out of my

head.” There was also a difference highlighted between the atmosphere of a Music classroom, versus environments established in other subjects;

There’s less loathing of the subject when you go into a Music classroom cause people choose to be [there] ... some things are to do with the teacher, like getting students comfortable ... [but] it would also have to be student attitude ... cause for Music it’s more to do with passion.

Avery had “never really had bad Music teachers, mostly cause I’m mostly self-taught with Music, pretty much”, but enjoyed the consistency in the approach and style of Mrs Maple reasoning “it’s better for keeping on track with what we’re learning and stay[ing] focused”.

Avery was considering a career pathway in “law or medical things ... something that helps people, like being a doctor or police officer or something like that. Something that really helps people. While he saw his interests in Music and Drama as indirectly useful to these roles “because it can make people find joy”, Avery did not consider Music as a professional career due to the highly competitive and randomised nature of fame. He perceived Music as “such a hard field to get into” and an industry in which “it would be really difficult for me to actually get popular”. Instead, Avery clarified the significant role that secondary education plays in influencing later-in-life goals; “it really does shape your future in the first 20 years of it ... and then as soon as you’re out of school, whatever credentials you’ve gotten from school will get you into certain jobs”.

#### ***4.2.6 Holly (Year 9)***

Holly was a highly independent student, who preferred her own company and could struggle relating to and communicating with her peers; “I’m not a people person ... I don’t overly get along with people”. She came from a family where “there’s eight of us in one house ... I have one older [sister], and then four younger [siblings]”, and shares a split-garage bedroom with her sister. When asked if her parents had any expectations, she made clear that her parents simply wanted more for her than they had for themselves. Holly spent most of her free time out of school, working at a local fast-food restaurant, developing independence and financial freedom from her parents. She expressed being excited for work and looked forward to her “four or five shifts a week”. However, Holly’s feelings towards school were vastly different and reflected her tumultuous history within the education system. She attended five different

schools and “was suspended for the majority of Term 2” at Chestnut High School in 2018 due to behavioural difficulties. She recalled a history of bullying which tarnished her memories of primary school, and recounted background learning issues in her foundational experiences with reading and writing, relating this to her current inability to “even do a year 5 spelling test”. Holly clarified her current achievement level, acknowledging that “I got straight Ds in my report last semester ... Mum was like disappointed cause she was like ‘I know you’re better than that’”. Holly believed that these grades were less reflective of her academic abilities, but more of her attendance and engagement within the learning environment which was understood by her parents. Teachers had a large influence on Holly’s attitude towards school, and her willingness to attend and participate in classes. She only had good relationships with, and perceptions of, a few teachers at Chestnut High School including her science teacher, head of year and Mrs Maple. In all other classes, Holly’s behaviour was regularly noted as problematic, reflecting her attitude of “I don’t want to be here. So, I’m not going to sit here in a classroom with people that I don’t even like and listen to what you have to say because I have to be here”. She instead preferred “the Music classes ... we’re all on the floor, we’re all sitting down and we’re not carrying things in”.

Holly expressed that Music was “the only reason I come to school...it’s the only subject I like”, feeling as if it helps her to “block out all of the world pretty much. Listening to music, or playing ... instead of just being by myself, it just makes me feel”. She chose Music for an elective out of enjoyment and a “want to learn a wider variety of music”, with “Mrs Maple ha[ving] like a 1% part in it”. Holly expressed frustration towards her classmates in elective Music who seemed disinterested, stating “I don’t understand why if you didn’t wanna be in Music, if you don’t enjoy it, why pick it as a subject?”. She explained further how she felt these students were taking up time and attention within the Music class and wanted to tell them “don’t come to class then. It doesn’t bother us; we want to be here”. Her other electives included “Cooking and I was in Child Studies but ... this incident happened, so I asked to get changed to Sport”, referring to behavioural, and social disagreements with peers that resulted in a change of electives. Holly described not really enjoying Child Studies as it was not related to her interests, or expectations for the course, and relayed mixed feelings towards Cooking as a subject. Holly described how the practical elements of the class are what made it most enjoyable: “all we do is copy down what’s in our book, and it’s just stupid. Like we’re not



learning anything from that. I like the more hands-on stuff”. However, Holly was simply taking Sport to fill the space in her timetable, revealing “I don’t like PE at all”.

At her previous school, Cashew Catholic School, Holly remembers the Music classes being based in “a lot more theory than prac”, which she felt contributed to her having

... stronger and weaker [skills]...I understand Music and I can sometimes read sheet music...but I feel like when it comes to actually sitting down and learning it and playing it, I feel like it takes me a lot longer than a couple of other people to learn music pieces.

Generally, Holly was “okay with the writing stuff” but tended to find practical, playing activities more difficult. She elaborated how what makes someone ‘good at Music’ depends on their level of understanding, rather than their practical playing abilities. When asked whether she found Music difficult, Holly highlighted how her enjoyment of the subject was derived from the challenge that it presents: “If it was easy, it wouldn’t be enjoyable”.

Holly’s future goals included wanting to pursue a professional science career and a future desire to “do chem and bio so I can go to the uni and be a forensic officer or scientist”. However, her current low self-perception of “I’m not smart enough” was negatively impacting on her motivation and engagement within the related subjects. When discussing her future subject choice prospects, Holly revealed “I don’t even know if I’m going to stay after Year 10. I do want to drop out”. She explained wanting to leave school because “I don’t really enjoy learning and being here, [and] I don’t really enjoy being around a lot of the people here”. As education was compulsory for all young people until they turn 17, Holly expressed her intentions to participate in tertiary education and “do a TAFE course in childcare”. Holly explained that if she had to remain in school and choose HSC-level subjects, “I probably would do Music. If Mrs Maple took it, teaches Year 11 Music, I’d probably do it”. As of 2019, Holly had left school, choosing to continue with her job, and is seeking TAFE education through her workplace.

#### *4.2.7 James (Year 9)*

James described himself as “a nice person ... I’d find myself sporty; I’m not really creative”. Outside-of-school, he prefers to socialise with friends, play video games and basketball. However, these out-of-school interests did not extend to Music, with James not taking lessons or owning an instrument to practice on at home. He justified that “I just haven’t got around to it, but I am getting a piano this year” and when asked whether or not he intends to take lessons, James revealed “possibly, but at the moment, probably not. I guess it’s just ... I don’t really have enough time to do it, but maybe on a weekend if I find some time”. James is the youngest of three children in his family, which he described as “definitely not” musical. His parents were supported and interested in his progress at school and had “high expectations in academics because of how much [progress] I’ve shown lately ... they’re happy with basically any report I get but they’re usually happy if I get something better”.

James chose electives of History, Sport and Music, explaining that he “chose Music to extend and improve on my strong passion of the piano”. James expressed that the teacher did not factor into his choice of Music as an elective “although I would honestly rather Mrs Maple than Mr Mahogany”. He went on to elucidate the differences between their teaching styles that developed this opinion: “Mr Mahogany is obviously a good teacher, but I think he sorta takes his lessons if you’re a really good player, you’re more likely to be acknowledged more. Rather than Mrs Maple’s general appreciation”. He “wanted to be more musical and ... learn more, rather than just playing” and was putting more effort into his Year 9 subjects because “considering it’s an elective, I guess everyone including myself take it much more seriously”. While James stated that “half the class” were his social friends, this was not a deciding factor in his choice of Music, stating that he “wouldn’t want to take it as much, but I’d probably still do it”. He also revealed that beyond the classroom, many of his social circle steered away from Music due to lack of personal interest, enjoyment or positive self-concept; “they think it’s too complex for them...we all had a discussion about what we’re gonna do ... and they just didn’t really sound like they liked the sound of it”. James discussed these ideas further, hypothesising that the difficulty of a piece or skill does not necessarily correlate to how ‘good’ an individual is at the subject: “If something’s really hard and you just can’t do it, I guess that doesn’t make you bad, that just makes it out of your league”. He believed that Music gets easier with the amount of practice, time and commitment afforded to developing the necessary skills.

James described “lik[ing] Music as a subject. It’s really fun”, and often plays piano with Harry during lessons, preferring “the sound of a keyboard and theme rather than a guitar ... I just like the keyboard more”. He perceived his own Music abilities as “average” yet knowledgeable for the short time he had been exposed to these ideas; “I haven’t really had too much time to become great, but I’ve had enough time to know what I’m doing”. Considering this self-concept, James found the difficulty of Music activities directly related to what is being learnt, or the complexity of a piece to be played. James noted continuing with Music “definitely for next year” but “not for Year 11 or 12. Definitely not”, justifying that “I don’t see that’s something I want to continue on, especially for HSC. I sorta want to do more academics”. He defined these academic subjects as ‘important’ due to their compulsory nature and relevance to future career pathways, highlighting “Maths, Science [as] important, English obviously, cause you’re forced to do it. I guess they’re really important towards everyone’s careers really”. In the future, James perceived his musical skills being useful and important in his life as an enjoyable hobby, but not as a personal career pathway; “as a hobby, I find it pretty important. It’s great ... [but] it’s not a career”. James’ HSC subject choices were founded on the same assumption that he will need certain academic skills for his future career aspirations in the Australian military, explaining that “I have career-based subjects to choose and focus on, and my hobby of Music and piano is less important”.

#### **4.2.8 Liam (Year 9)**

Liam was a talented, confident pianist who had been involved in Music since an early age. Originally born in Ireland, Liam had part of his primary school education in Australia but “not all of it” and discussed how his musical experiences were limited to those provided by his parents outside of school. At age 4, he started playing the piano and “went to this music school where I learnt sorta like what a crotchet is ... all the theory stuff” until he moved to Australia at age 7. His parents encouraged him to practice playing at home, disclosing that “my Mum, she wants me to practice a lot of Music” and that his parents had the general expectation to “get a good grade”. His parents were supportive of his musical interests and choices at school, allowing Liam to select his electives independently: “They said whatever I choose, they’re fine with”. Liam’s parents also offered support through the provision of Music lessons, and access to instruments to practice at home. His “Music room” at home included a 44-key weighted keyboard, guitars, picks and kapos, a MIDI keyboard with a drum pad, speakers and a computer; “I want to create a Music studio”.

Outside of school, Liam participated in a range of sports and musical activities that kept him relatively busy, as he explained he was “usually pretty much late to everything”;

I do soccer, basketball and martial arts and then I have piano lessons. I had guitar lessons but I feel like I could teach myself a lot more so I quit that and I just teach myself ... and I used to do tennis as well.

He described participating in Music and martial arts “for about the same” length of time, and linked his enjoyment of the subjects to this prolonged engagement. However, Liam revealed that he “used to find piano lessons pretty boring cause I never played songs. We just played this thing out of a booklet and it was really boring”. The Stage 4 Music program actually reengaged him with the subject because he was able to play “whatever I wanted”, which resulted in his choice of elective Music as something that “I just felt I was good at ... I’ve been going Music ever since I was a little kid”. His other elective choices included “Sport and Cooking”, explaining that “I like cooking cause my Dad’s a chef, so he’s taught me a few things, and Sport cause I like sports”.

Liam had several friends in the elective Music class, easily listing names of peers such as “Jason ... Jake, Nick [and] Ethan”, and clarified that he would still take Music even if his friends chose not to. When asked if he would drop the subject if one of his friends decided to leave, he replied “probably not, cause I’d still get to see [them], but I’d rather stick with Music”. He also articulated that his friends had more of influence in his choice and uptake of guitar as an instrument, rather than on his choice of elective subjects. He described picking up guitar as a result of being shown how to play “the simplest version of Seven Nation Army” from Jake.

Musically, Liam perceives himself as “pretty good”, and feels like he can excel and succeed within the Music classroom: “With soccer and everything else, you don’t really feel like you’re the best at it. But with Music, I feel like I’m at least decent”. He had “a good understanding of what I’m doing” and expressed that “that probably playing is” his favourite type of musical activity. Liam also revealed that he did not find Music difficult, just “in areas where I dislike or I’m not too familiar with ... I’m not really a big fan of classical. I don’t find the classical side interesting. That’s basically it. And, a lot of theory”. While he believed “practice” made someone ‘good’ at Music, conversely he stated that those with poor Music skills have “no

understanding in it, no practice. You know if they don't like it". However, he also recognised that Music was not for everyone, suggesting that choice depends on passion or enjoyment of the subject: "some people just think they're not as passionate with Music, so they don't reckon it's a good subject cause they don't like it. But it's like the same for like, some people like maths, some people don't".

Although Liam was a good leader, his confidence and level of skill relative to his classmates could sometimes lead to disagreements with group members and casual teachers. Liam explained that having a range of casual teachers take the class "stops us from doing what we do" in the normal Music routine. When asked what teachers need to understand in order to improve the experience, he indicated the importance of practical, playing experiences: "For me and Jason, we wanna really spend as much time as we can playing music. It's important to know the history of Music, but it's also nice to prac or just do the music that you were shown".

Outside of school involvement, Liam was determined to continue Music involvement, expressing that it was "just something I feel like no one can tell me I'm bad at, cause I feel like I'm actually sorta good at it ... it's pretty much my dream job". When asked what he would like to do after school as a job, that he explained a desire to be a musician and travel "but if that doesn't work ... probably, I dunno ... Firefighter". When asked why he had chosen this alternative career, Liam retorted "tonnes of movies and shows, I got inspired ... Chicago Fire". Liam saw his current Music education as important in reaching this goal, reflecting that "it'll help me, build my confidence even more and just building passion with Music".

#### ***4.2.9 Max (Year 9)***

Max defined himself with his musical talents and interests, explaining that he "like[d] to play guitar, because I can express myself". He set himself a goal of playing for "at least an hour [per day]and usually I smash that goal...basically all I do from when I get home from school at 3-ish, I just play guitar ... I try and improve my playing skills". When asked about the importance of Music in his life, Max revealed he was "always listening to music" and had an average self-concept and found "nothing super easy"; "I wouldn't say I'm good, but I wouldn't say I'm bad". Max described how the highest point of challenge came when trying to practice 'Creeping Death' by Metallica, due to the difficult strumming and rhythmic patterns: "For me it was probably learning to play really fast ... it's like, all down picks and it's really hard". Max

received a great deal of support from his parents, indicating that he “definitely wouldn’t have wanted to” continue with Music if it was not for their help providing lessons, instruments and equipment. When asked whether this support came with expectations from his parents, Max specified that “if I fail they’ll be alright with it. They’ll still be proud of me for trying ... They don’t really expect a lot from me, but that’s good”. Although his parents were not overly musical, with Max outlining that “they listen to a lot of music, but they don’t play Music”, he stated that “I have a brother. He played drums in one of my bands for a couple of years ... he kind of gave up on that a while ago”. His brother had recently changed jobs so Max was “not really sure what he does”, but hypothesised that boredom played a factor in the move away from Music: “I think he was just too occupied doing other things like working, and I think he got bored of it”.

Growing up, Max could not recall any real Music experiences in primary school apart from “recorder lessons”, and remembered participating in Music “not in school, but outside of school”. He had played guitar for 9 years, and began having lessons on the guitar “in Year 1...when I was 5” after his father found an advertisement in the school newsletter: “it was in, like a newspaper thing for the school, it was like an ad and my Dad was like ‘You should do that’, so I’m like ‘Sure’”. Currently, Max “go[es] to a lesson for half an hour a week. But it’s more on practical stuff and learning. At the moment I’m learning scales”. He began learning Music theory and reading scores “around Year 3 or 4 ... [just] TAB ... at the time it was [difficult], but I learnt it pretty quickly”. However, Max disclosed that he took a break from playing the guitar for a few months during mid-primary school. He eventually returned to playing because he “missed it way too much” and has remained a Music student “ever since, cause I know what it is to miss it”.

Max’s involvement in music at school was mainly restricted to Music classes, with his experience of Year 7 and 8 being different than his lessons out-of-school “because of all the pianos and stuff and I just wasn’t used to it, but I liked it”. In Year 7, he “had to play keyboard” but was extended the choice of guitar in Year 8. In 2018, Max took elective Music alongside “Photography and elective History ... I don’t really like Photography that much. It’s just boring. [We] don’t do much in it, it’s not that involving”. He communicated that he enjoyed Music more than other electives, putting it down to a matter of passion: “I have a passion in it more than Photography so I guess that’s why”. While Max participated in a range of practical

playing experiences outside of school, he saw classroom-based Music as “theory while doing prac, if that makes sense”. He indicated an enjoyment of both the theory and practical sides of Music, and that he perceived both as having equal importance “because I can learn from the writing classes, and like at the moment I’m just starting to learn sheet Music and I really want to do that. But yeah, for the most part, prac is better”. Max described how “theory can be harder in my opinion, because I haven’t done it the whole time. I’ve mainly done practical stuff”, likening the difficulty of a task to the length of time involved with background experiences. However, when asked if he found Music difficult, he reasoned further that previous experiences and enjoyment of the subject often lead to better engagement and uptake. His perception of someone ‘bad’ at Music was based on “if they’re not enjoying themselves doing it and ... you know just, they don’t really want to”.

Max was generally engaged and focused in class, and participated actively during discussions and brainstorming sessions with his peers. He consistently took notes without being prompted by the teacher and spent time noodling and experimenting with peers during practical lessons. He could fall into ‘off-task/on-topic’ chat during individual tasks, engaging in conversation and playing that was Music-related and developed skills and understandings, although not related to the specific task at hand. Although he is not socially friendly with all members of the class, he finds the atmosphere welcoming and accepting, explaining how “it’s not that I don’t get along with anyone, I just don’t really hang out with everyone all the time”. Apart from the students in the class, Max enjoyed the teaching of Mrs Maple who took his class for Year 8, but not Year 7. He made clear that “I prefer Mrs Maple’s [style] because it’s more involving ... we get a say in things, like if we’re not enjoying something, we can say that, and she’ll understand”. When asked if he would still take Music if Mrs Maple was not going to be the teacher, he responded “ah, probably not”, indicating a strong connection with his Music teachers. Max also articulated the deep influence of his guitar teachers, and their willingness to let him explore and experiment with musical ideas.

During observations, it became clear that Max’s attitudes and behaviours in the Music classroom directly correlated to the connection and respect he formed with the teacher. Max “talked back, questioned” and displayed a “smart-alec” attitude towards casual teachers taking their Music class, responding to instructions with “Well, I could get back to it if you stopped asking me questions”. He did complete the work but showed reluctance to follow instructions

of the teacher. This was a vastly different attitude to that displayed for Mrs Maple, with Max generally maintaining engagement, participating in discussions and showing respect by not talking back.

When asked why he chose elective Music, Max insisted that it was always going to be included in his options because of its relationship with his lifelong goals and aspirations; “It was one that I knew I wanted to do because...I want to go with it for the rest of my life...I knew that this would improve me, and I had fun during Year 8”. He also revealed that his “friends did tie into it ... [they] definitely did make it more enjoyable”, but that his choice was not dependent on their involvement. Instead, it was his innate enjoyment of music which was noted as the most influential reason for continuing with the subject. Max revealed “I wanna do [Music] as a career later on ... Music is what I like ... I wanna be in a band”, specifying that “I’m in 2 at the moment but I’ve been in a bunch before”, which had all been in the “heavy metal, or thrash” genres. However, Max expressed that the bands had not been able to meet up “since my last gig I did a month ago. I’ve been meaning to contact them, I just keep on getting busy with other stuff which sucks”.

When asked if he thought it was important to do well in Music, Max indicated that this was dependent on the individual person and their perceived usefulness of the skills throughout life; “it kinda depends on what your plan is ... cause I want to continue doing it my whole life, so I’d rather improve on it to get really good”. As a result, he believed he would “definitely” choose Music as a subject for Year 11 and 12 “because I really enjoy it”. At this stage of the data collection, he was yet to decide on any other subjects, with Music the only unwavering choice “because that’s what I want to do with my life ... just cause of how fun it is and I can like, make a living doing what I like”. He saw his current school-based Music experiences “definitely” relating to these future goals, that without “I think I could [still achieve] but I think I’d have more...trouble doing it”. Max believed his current Music education in school “opens up like, variety in genres and stuff like that”, with his goal set on “learn[ing] sheet Music this year, and just to improve my overall Music knowledge”.



#### *4.2.10 Dean (Year 11)*

Dean was a self-taught guitarist who described Music and spirituality as his defining core values. His identity as a Christian informed his everyday life, after making the decision to follow the religion in the early years of high school; “I didn’t make a proper true connection until I turned about 14 or 13 ... I looked into it and did some study and decided that yeah, this is what I want to live for”. Dean was deeply involved in his church community, choosing to help out with the Kids Club during school holidays and plays in the church band when necessary.

Dean revealed that his tricky home life situations had been supported by his Church community who had stepped in and stepped up to accommodate the struggles he and his family had faced over the years:

My family’s been through hell. We’ve been through so much different stuff and stuff’s happened, but like no matter what happens where we are, there’s always so many people in our community that’s come and helped ... we still don’t know who they were but we were struggling with money for food at one point, and out of nowhere, someone just put a thing in our mailbox with like \$100 Woolies [card].

Although Dean did not initially identify his parents as musical, he relayed that both had been involved in choirs and had a D.J position during their lives which gave him some foundational experiences. When asked whether his parents had any expectations of him, he replied “in Music, not really”, and went on to justify how they are just “happy I’m playing”. Dean expressed that he was “self-taught” on guitar, with his brother “lik[ing] to think he [taught me], but really, he just put up a song and goes ‘Okay, learn this and come back when you’ve got it’”. He never had formal Music lessons, instead teaching himself from video tutorials, school-based classes and practical experience.

Dean was currently a member of two different bands outside of school. He described one as “an actual band”, while the other was based in his “church and it changes over the weeks” depending on who is available. In his first band, Dean adopted the role of “rhythm guitarist and singer” alongside “a mate who plays electric in the band and a mate who plays drums, so there’s three of us”. He revealed that his fellow band mates were still relatively new to playing Music,

making it difficult to practice and progress at times. His other band evolved from his involvement in the musical team at his Church, who he identified as having more developed musical skills and experiences which he was learning from. Dean admitted he preferred “church band at the moment” as their level of experience made it easier to adapt to new repertoire and ‘play’ songs more quickly.

Dean had limited background experiences in Music from primary school. He recalled that “every class did recorders except my class, so their class would do a Music lesson and my class didn’t ... they just forgot our class. It was pretty bad”. This meant that his first taste of formal Music education came “in Year 7”, which allowed him the opportunity to try his hand at a range of instruments. Dean found the “performance part” of Music easy “if I’m playing what I like, but [the] writing part, I find a bit more tricky”. He explained that what made writing difficult was “just remembering all of the different bits and pieces that I don’t really understand. Like it comes to a test, and I’m like [mocks throwing hands up in exasperation] ‘Oh man, how am I supposed to explain this?’”. He had an average self-concept, believing he was “not like, really good [but] not really bad. I’m kinda in the middle”, and provided reasoning for this, stating “I know how to play guitar and I can play chords, but I still want to push myself to be able to play harder things”. He reflected that “it’s always hard the first time you pick up an instrument. Like no matter who you are, you can’t just pick up an instrument and play a song”. Dean also explained that “Music’s probably one of the harder subjects I chose, cause I don’t quite understand it as well as other subjects so I have to work a little bit harder to try and understand”. He recalled how his musical abilities were developed through “practicing a lot and I got better at it”. Dean chose Music as an elective in Year 9 and 10 “because I like to play guitar and want to get better so I can play more songs and be able to play more fluently”. He further elucidated that his experiences in Year 7 and 8 encouraged him to continue taking Music after discovering that “I like this, I’m good at this”. This opportunity to play in the band sparked his personal interest and enjoyment of making his own music, and playing his choice of repertoire on the guitar. Dean’s desire to “play guitar like you see in the movies” drove him to keep developing his skills and push past this bad experience, influencing his continuation of Music in Year 11 and 12.

Dean had been taught by a range of teachers while participating in school-based Music education, including “Mrs Maple. I had Mr Mahogany ... And then we had Mrs Aspen as well”.

He articulated the differences between these teachers, noting differences in the organisation and enthusiasm of each the level of organisation and enthusiasm each brought to the classroom:

Mr Mahogany ... didn't really care about any musicology, and when we did musicology, no one really paid attention ... Mrs Aspen, she was very, very good at singing and we had a band back then ... it was Mr Mahogany's band [but] we always wanted her to take it cause she made it better.

When asked about the differences between Mrs Aspen and Mrs Maple, he referenced the difference between teaching and support styles offered by both teachers, particularly in relation to his learning of the guitar. He explained that Mrs Aspen was able to "direct the singers, and direct all the bits and pieces" of a song due to her vocal experience, while Mrs Maple was able to "listen to what we're going and gives us positive feedback ... she doesn't really understand what we all play cause her instrument was ... clarinet. It's a very different instrument to what we all play".

Dean disclosed that he would be continuing with his school-based Music education next year "because I enjoy playing guitar and I need it to get an ATAR" [Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank – awarded at the conclusion of the HSC]. He justified that "I'll definitely stick with it and I'll do it for HSC" but was still not sure of the repertoire or electives within the course that he will choose. The only thing that would make Dean not continue with Music next year would be "if I had to do like, really hard theory for it". An opportunity to attend the local University after an open day inspired his future career choices and enthusiasm to get through school in order to be able to attend a course; "I wanna go to uni. I wanna do something with marketing, yeah a business degree". Dean believed it was important to do well in Music, depending on "if you're one who wants to succeed in Music or succeed to get into uni or something...if you choose Music for Year 11 and 12, you most likely want to get to uni or get somewhere". When asked if he saw any application of his current Music skills and knowledge to his future aspirations, he explained that "if I do make my own business it would be like something to do with like work that I'm doing like photography or videography.". Although he did not "wanna do [Music] as a profession", Dean wanted to "have a band and stuff, since I do Church music and stuff like that. I wanna play at like, maybe a big youth event in a church band kinda thing". This led Music to having a status more as a hobby than a career in Dean's life; "it's kinda more of a hobby thing and that's why ... I'll play it when I want to play it kind of thing".

#### ***4.2.11 Grace (Year 11)***

Grace is a talented pianist, who is “very motivated and focused” member of the classroom, and was voted Head Girl of Chestnut High School for 2019 by her teachers and peers. She enjoys playing piano and uses it to help modulate her mood; “whenever I’m feeling a little bit flustered with homework or just with anything, I always just go and play the piano ... it sorta just changes my mindset a little bit”. Outside of school, Grace participates in regular sporting opportunities, and has a history of Music lesson involvement. However, her main hobby appears to be netball, in which she trains and plays “four nights a week”. She discussed a long and varied history of sport participation, “play[ing] a lot of netball. It’s like my relax time ... tennis and a little bit when I was younger, I used to dance ... but then as things got more intense with school, I sorta just dropped it down a little bit”. She also “used to swim” and “got into a high level ... [but] didn’t want to continue anymore [and for] Dad [it] was getting a bit of a chore”. Instead, Grace chose to start piano lessons after prompts from her father and a familial influence; “he did piano when he was younger at the same place in Keiraville ... his whole family went there so I started there when I was 9”. These Music lessons not only taught her technical piano playing skills, but also musical theory and aural knowledge such as Italian terms and vocabulary for dynamic and tempo changes, and score reading. Grace recalled how she “did like, 2 exams in the one year so half and half. But I loved piano when I started; it was really good”. However, this enjoyable perception of lessons slowly faded, with Grace justifying that she “gave up the piano cause it was just too much with all the exams and eisteddfods; I wasn’t enjoying doing those anymore and that’s what the whole point of the thing was”. To accommodate this, her “2<sup>nd</sup> cousin who was one of my teachers there said she’s happy to come to my house and give me lessons if I wanted, so I did that for a little while” until she felt like she “needed a break from everything”. Despite the move away from Music lessons, Grace disclosed that she was “gonna start back up for this performance [assessment]” and is “waiting for [the teacher] to get back to me”.

Grace comes from a small family, consisting of her parents and sister who also attends Chestnut High School but was described as “the complete opposite” of Grace; “She’s sporty but we’re the complete opposite...she dances; I don’t dance at all ... I’m more of a like ‘gotta get this done by this time’ and she’s like ‘ah, it’ll be fine if I do. It’ll happen!’”. Her family were all creative people that used their skills in different ways, with her father being more musical than

her mother, and helping her learn some of her early piano pieces. Grace's parents both work for the family electronics company, with her mother helping with accounting and financing. However, Grace indicated she would "probably not" go into this family business as it does not align with her personal interests or what she 'sees' herself doing; "I'm good with money, like I'm able to with math and the money but I don't think I could see myself sitting in an office all day working with money and stuff. Or, in an electrical shop".

During primary school, Grace recounted some basic memories of playing the recorder and participating in choir groups, but stressed that these experiences were "definitely not" the same as Music in high school; "it was mainly just learning the recorder ... and singing choir with Mrs Jones and an egg shaker to keep in time...in Year 4 I got to be the timer person with the golden egg and shake it". Her early high school experiences were heavily aligned with the work she had already completed through her private piano lessons, with more activities based around "This is a crotchet. This is what crotchets sound like. I sorta zoned out a lot with that". She also detailed her introduction to playing guitar and other instruments in her secondary education; "I remember some of the Music from Year 7. I remember the guitar part very frankly. I hated guitar. I can't play guitar; I can't change chords fast enough".

Although Grace may show confidence and control over her technical, aural skills, she described having crippling anxiety that affected her performances and concentration within assessment tasks;

I'm very anxious. I always want to do well, like I hate the word fail...when I do fail, I get really down on myself and I have to make sure I pass next time...I feel like I let everyone else down as well as me.

This anxiety "depends on what [the task] is", but has formed a part of the way she sees herself, with Grace being resigned to the fact that "I do get very stressed out, that's the way it goes". When Grace feels as if she has not succeeded, she attributes her failures to her own application of effort and will compare her marks with those of her peers to gauge the standard of her work; "I failed the physics test, but it was a quiz. No one studied for it; we didn't have enough time to finish it so I wasn't really upset with failing that cause no one passed". This was also evident in her performance assessment, where Grace was observed as being "very nervous" and "expressed not taking Music next year due to performance anxiety".

Although she was “highly expressive” in her playing style, she “made a few wrong notes” which she “focused on instead of her performance as a whole”.

When asked about her intentions for continuing with Music as a subject, Grace expressed different ideas throughout the school year. During interviews in Term 2, she indicated wanting to take Music for Year 12, saying “Yeah, I think so”, elaborating that this decision would be changed “if I didn’t know what else to drop and I wanted a free subject”. During subsequent interviews in Term 3, Grace expressed greater ambivalence towards her choice due to her growing anxiety over performance assessments; “I’m tossing it up a little bit ... cause I want to drop something because I want the free subject. 13 units is too much”. Grace explained that this was “not because of the subject or anything. It’s just because I hate performing”. This culminated in her answering ‘No’ to choosing Music next year on her survey form, providing the justification of “I do not enjoy performing by myself and is something I get too stressed on”. When prompted for further explanation, Grace indicated that it would be difficult to leave the class, expressing that she “just love[d] the subject. I love the teachers. I love playing the piano. It’s always something that I have really liked a lot”. However, she wanted to mitigate any potential stress for the HSC course, describing how she was thinking “about the long term, like if I get into the HSC I’m already going to be stressing enough. I really don’t how how well I’m going to be able to perform on the day”.

In contrast to performance, Grace finds the ‘aural’ component of Music classes less difficult or overwhelming, due to her childhood experiences in AMEB exams. She elucidated how previous participation in Music lessons made Music “a lot easier ... through Year 9 and 10 ... we had these little theory books that we got to work through all year and so everyone had no idea, but I just knew them ... it was really, really easy for me”. Grace acknowledged the difficulties of these tasks for her classmates, and suggested teachers could “make the theory or aural lessons just a bit more engaging for everyone so they get the feel of it”. She posits that a ‘feeling’ for Music is “something that you’re born with. It’s a natural instinct, like you’ve always been able to”, which she relates to her own experience saying “I’ve always loved Music, but some other people, they’re just not born with it. They’re just really uncoordinated. They just don’t have that feel for it”. She appreciated the difficulties an individual might face when trying to learn Music which could result in someone being “probably not honestly bothered to

be able to learn it”; “they might not have very good rhythm. They might not really be able to hear the different pitches ... it takes a lot of time to learn a piece”.

Grace recalls “hat[ing] the feeling of going to exams and eisteddfods. I put so much pressure on myself, like ‘I just can’t do it anymore’. I needed a break”. She summarised that the repetitive practice may have caused her original move away from piano, but recently these feelings had begun to change. Grace revealed that she “wasn’t going to originally” choose Music as an elective for Year 9, 10 or even HSC study but “changed my mind cause ... I just really like the Music atmosphere and I just enjoy the music and I enjoy the class and playing the piano with different people and new songs”. In her survey, Grace responded that she chose elective Music because “I enjoy playing as part of a group with classmates and learning different styles. Also as a relaxing subject”. In interviews, elaborated further how her choice of Music was based in enjoyment; “I chose Music in year 9 because the subjects I wanted to do in Year 9, I wanted to have a little bit of fun with them. I wanted to do something that I enjoyed”. However, this choice came at a time “when I needed a break from Music ... I’d had enough”. Grace’s experiences with the Year 9 band re-introduced her to playing in a more enjoyable setting. This resulted in a change where “playing the piano suddenly got [fun]. I liked learning new songs so it wasn’t a chore anymore”. Her choice was then guided by the thought “I may as well just choose Music – it’s not gonna be that difficult cause I’ve learnt everything before, especially in Year 9 and 10”. Grace “loved all of [her] electives in Year 9” and “took Child Studies and Sport” alongside Music. She described how her electives were her favourite subjects taken during this time, as they required a different cognitive load than the rest of her subjects, thoroughly enjoying her participation in all three; “you had to work but it wasn’t as difficult as all the sciences and maths subjects ... I had a lot of nice people in those classes, and I just like the content”. She reasoned that her choices of electives were also related to personal interest, and relevance they held to her future goals; “I chose Sport because ... I thought I might want to become some sort of physio ... something health related when I leave school ... [Sport] pretty much leads on to Year 11 and 12 PDH”.

For HSC study, Grace is currently enrolled in “Chemistry, Physics, PDH, Music, Advanced English and Advanced & Extension Maths” and finds her science subjects “fun but they’re very difficult”. She stated that she is “liking pretty much all of my subjects at the moment”, but indicated that Music was a point of difference amongst the rest of her scheduled subjects;

“Music’s like a very one, where I can just sort of ... like I can do well, but it’s very not a stress-y subject”. Although she does not see a direct correlation between Music and her other subjects, Grace highlighted that Music was “probably more related to...health, probably maths and physics and stuff like that...the teachers do have a different style, but I relate to most people’s teaching style that I have. So, it’s more the content learning; it’s just different”. Her least favourite subject she posited was due to “bad circumstances” rather than disliking the subject content, teacher or environment itself; “there’s like different aspects of it, just the way things are at the moment, like chemistry, our teacher’s been away and we’ve just been getting all these sheets and it’s just sheet-overload”.

Although Grace knows she “definitely wants to go to uni”, she is still unsure of what pathway she will take, stating “I don’t know what I want to study yet”. She has some future aspirations surrounding her interest in sports and physical education “starting with a physio, and then like an osteo-therapist and then maybe a teacher, but I’ve got no idea”. Grace also revealed how she had “never really pictured” herself becoming a professional musician, or pursuing a career in Music as she saw playing the piano more as a hobby; “it’s an option [just] never really pictured, cause when I first started the piano was always a hobby for me ... where my netball was always that one that I did go to”. Instead, Grace explained discussing with her physio what knowledge was needed and was told “chemistry really helps, and that’s the one I’m debating about dropping. But if I do need it in uni, I don’t want to fall behind cause I dropped it in Year 12”. When asked to reflect if Music was useful to these career intentions, Grace revealed how Music and playing the piano acted like a “back-up” skill that she could apply to other jobs where necessary; “if I do become a teacher ... I can always teach them Music and it’s just something I know I can use later in life, especially if I don’t know what I want to do”.

#### ***4.2.12 Isiah (Year 11)***

Isiah was a quiet, self-taught guitarist who spent his free time “hanging out with [his] friends a lot”. He had his own guitar at home to play and practice on, but had never participated in formal instrument lessons. Isiah recalled beginning to learn guitar in “Year 7 and Year 6, but that was just through me”, and “started off playing by ear, and then I started going to TAB. I start with figuring out some basic songs”. Isiah identified himself as the creative sibling within his family, with “two brothers, both younger” who “both like sport” such as “motorcross, mountain biking, surfing...just any sport”. Although his mother and her side of the family was



described as “not really” musical, Isiah revealed that his “Dad played the guitar since he was like my age and then my pop was in a band as well when he was in Broken Hill or something, so from that side yeah”. He described how his father “taught me a few chords and then I just went from there”, and that his parents “don’t really” have any expectations of him; “They just say ‘Do what you want’”.

Isiah was new to Chestnut High School in 2018, attending one other school prior. He recounted musical memories relating to “pretty much singing ... more choir-work type stuff, that was about it. No instruments or stuff”. These primary school experiences were “not Music as I know it [now]”, with Isiah explaining that the “first time I had proper Music was in Year 7. You just learnt like little riggs on the guitar or keyboard”. He recalled in “Year 7, they introduced like all instruments. They said you can play whatever you want, if you like that one” and subsequent experiences in Year 8 that were “pretty much the same, and they were just teaching us the basic concepts of everything”. However, Isiah revealed that he “didn’t do Music for Year 9 or 10”, because “I didn’t think any of my mates were doing it ... I didn’t know much theory work...they all knew the theory and had done lessons since they were heaps little, so I was lower”. Isiah felt that he would not be able to keep up with his peers who found the theory-aspect of Music “pretty easy, like I remember copying other people’s work and that was just to get through the year”.

However, Isiah chose Music as an HSC subject when he moved to Chestnut High School “because I enjoy it”. He described how the principal encouraged him to “choose something that you enjoy, cause it would suck if you have heaps of hardcore subjects”. He described his initial struggles adapting to the musical terminology used in class, but indicated that he does “not really” experience the same issues at Maple High School because “Miss is pretty cool”; “The theory-based work you just gotta get used all the terminology and that type of stuff and then it’s alright. But yeah, I struggled with it a bit”. He finds performance more approachable, explaining that “it’s just easier to do cause it’s not hard. You just gotta practice and get good at it”. Isiah also seemed close with the boys in his Music class, in particular Aaron, Adam and Riley who can provide both distraction and motivation to participate in class. However, Isiah expressed that even if his friends decided to drop Music, he would “still take it” based on his own personal interest.

Alongside Music, Isiah takes “Food Tech, Maths General, Timber, English standard and business studies” and revealed that “maths is alright. I probably prefer Music over all of them, just [because of] all prac work and all the other [students] makes it more fun and enjoyable”. Currently, his least favourite subject would be “probably timber or business. I just don’t like the teacher in timber, and then business is just more boring than others”. He elucidated further on his feelings about his timber teacher, and the lack of support and guidance he receives;

He just doesn’t show what to do, I’ll always ask him like ‘Oh, how do you do this?’

and he goes ‘Oh, you should know that’ and it’s just like, walks off and I’m like

‘yeah but you have to teach us’.

Mrs Maple also described this teacher as “hard, bitter [and] older” and revealed that he had “such a bad argument with [another student in her class] that he has still not returned, and looks to be taking an apprenticeship instead” of attending school further. Reflective notes also showed that “Isiah asked to build a guitar for his final project/timber major work to which the teacher replied, ‘Oh, that’s far too much work for you mate; you’ll never get it done’”.

Isiah believes that “a good understanding of Music or liking the music I feel like helps you a lot more” and moderates whether someone would find Music hard or easy in the classroom. He doesn’t find Music particularly difficult, detailing that “you just gotta remember it all. It’s not a hard subject”. Isiah expressed that “just practice” can make someone good, as they “can play more variety of music and just get better”, with a balanced set of skills in both playing and technical knowledge required. Conversely, he believes that “someone that can’t really play much” would be considered limited in their musical ability, but elucidated that “you can’t be ‘bad’ in a way. Like if you practice heaps, you can get good actually”. He expressed wanting to be in Music “cause I enjoy it, pretty much” and sees himself as an “average” level Music student. Isiah would consider himself “fairly musical” as he is “always listening to it or playing it or something like that”. This leads music to having a “pretty important” status in his life as he “listen[s] to it a lot [and] just play[s] ... I probably listen to it a bit more than I play it. I like hearing different chords and notes. I’ll be able to go and just figure it out”.

He intends to continue taking Music next year because he “enjoy[s] Music and it’s a big part of my life, and it’s a good break from all my other subjects”. He elucidated further, reasoning

that “I can always do the practical for assessments and that, and choose that instead of the theory work” which, if increased, would turn him off of continuing his formal Music education. For his in-subject electives, Isiah intends to “take some performance electives and depending on my Viva result, I’ll probably see if I’ll take it as well”. His goals for this year include “go[ing] good in all of my subjects really”, hoping to achieve “probably a high C or like a B. it’s easy if you put in the work, but I more like to hang out with my friends and stuff”, stating that school is “not really” a priority to him right now. He is “not sure” whether or not he will drop any of his subjects for his Year 12 study, reasoning how his time is better spent in class and focusing on a subject that can contribute towards his ATAR mark; “I might keep them all cause then if I go bad in one, I can just throw it out ... If I’ve got free periods I probably won’t do anything in the way of study ... I might as well continue”.

Isiah’s initial career intentions included the possibility of leaving school to pursue “an apprenticeship for carpentry, but I decided not to” as he “wasn’t 100% about it”. As for his current plans, Isiah has “no idea” and expressed that “Music would be good as a career, like writing and that but ... I don’t know. I haven’t got like, anyone to do work with. So, I dunno apart from that. I’m not sure”. He would “not really” see himself going to University “because like, I don’t know what I want to do really”.

#### ***4.2.13 Jenna (Year 11)***

Jenna is an experienced alto vocalist who acknowledges “two completely different sides” of herself; “I’ve got the creative side and then I play hockey. It’s so worldly apart”. She has always managed to find a balance between these activities “cause everything falls on different days so it’s great”, but emphasised that usually, her creative interests take precedence due to her seeing a future application for the skills. Jenna “tend[s] to choose the creative side. I see a future in that, whereas in sport I don’t”, instead participating to “keep fit and ... keep my stress levels down while I’m going through this stage”. She detailed her current out-of-school involvement in sport, and her non-participation this year due to an injury but hopes to re-join her team next year; “I do play hockey, but I’ve had to stop for this year due to injuries, but I’m hoping I can play next year, cause we’re hoping to get our original team back. It’s gonna be really exciting”.

Jenna currently lives with her mother, younger sister and grandparents, after her parents “separated when I was in Year 6. It’s been a while and I’m still not over it, but I’ll get over it

at some point”. Although her parents are not musical, highlighting that “My Mum is absolutely tone deaf, and my Dad can’t do anything to save his life”, Jenna finds most of her motivation and inspiration stems from her family who have always provided support and encouragement for her interests. She explained that her daily drive comes from wanting to “get stuff back for my parents. That is very much a driving force for me”. Jenna revealed that this desire was born out of the sacrifices her parents and grandparents have made to allow her to continue her creative involvement outside of school;

There was a bit of a rough patch between last year and the year before, mainly in the year before where we didn’t have the money for singing lessons. Where we had to ask my grandparents for money just because they didn’t want me to stop because they could ... being my parents, they’re obviously going to be supportive, but my Mum told me a while ago that just because she’s my Mum, she can still see potential in me. So, I was like ‘Oh, alright’ so that’s why we did it ... I sobbed after that.

Jenna went on to describe how her current participation in Music is very much dependent on the support and encouragement her family shows; “I don’t know because if I didn’t have the support from my parents ... I don’t think I’d find the inspiration and the will to continue doing it.” Jenna stated that her mother is “my harshest critic which I’m absolutely grateful for, but it’s really hard sometimes because you’re like ‘Mum I just want you to be supportive’ and she’s like ‘No! You’re doing it wrong!’ and I’m like ‘Ahh! My god!’”. Her mother also “works at Wollongong Uni” and was encouraging Jenna to maintain enrolment in all of her subjects currently, despite needing the free time at school to study and prepare for her assignment tasks. She made clear that she has “had anxiety for a very long time” which is “starting to come back now with all the stress” of HSC. Jenna believes that ‘dropping’ a subject “would make the world of difference” but feels as if she must follow her mother’s advice who intimately understands the process of ‘getting into university’; “she knows what I need to be doing to get into Early Entry and everything ... I’ve got to have a proper conversation again”.

Jenna did recall one significant negative experience of Music which affected her desire to compete in musical performance competitions such as eisteddfods. While she views this as a learning experience, she does admit that this caused her to have the attitude of “Let’s not do eisteddfods again”. Jenna recounted her experience, saying;

I was at an eisteddfod once where I was performing and I thought I was doing really well ... and beforehand I had an anxiety attack so I was freaking out, like I did not want to go up on stage, and this was like my first eisteddfod in a while. So it was absolutely horrible. I get off stage and the adjudicator comes up to me a little while later and she goes 'Are you Jenna?' and I'm like 'Yeah' and she looks at me and goes 'You did good, but because you don't look your age, we can't place you'. And I went ... [pulls face] like 'Umm ... what do you mean?' and she's like 'Are you actually 14?' and I'm like 'Yeah' and she goes 'because we thought you were placed differently. Otherwise you would have placed' and I was like ... [gob-smacked expression] 'Ohh' [groaning/complaining noise]. 'Okay'. And after that I was just kinda like 'Oh, so if people are just judging me on how I look, are they really paying attention to what I'm sounding like and how I'm actually performing?' so that kinda knocked me back a little bit and I was just like 'whatever' it'll be a good thing in the future, like it'll be fine. But back then I was like 'Oh ... oh ... alright'.

She explained how this experience, along with the highly subjective nature of judging someone's ability, made her not want to continue participating and has "never done eisteddfods since".

Jenna could only recount sporadic memories of Music in primary school, focusing mainly on her experience in the choir, taken by "just a teacher from the school". She began singing during primary school, after being encouraged by these choral experiences and realising "I actually enjoy this. Let's continue this!". She participated in "a private lesson for the first year with a drama class, and then I did a private lesson and a group lesson". After participating in lessons "for 3, possibly 4 years", Jenna had to stop "because we didn't have the money". Jenna explained that her "family has never been financially stable", with her grandparents stepping in to support her continuation of lessons in 2016 and 2017. She was also encouraged by friends to audition for a production of 'Camp Rock' in primary school, forming "one of the best experiences I've had". This inspired her to participate in further productions, recalling how she has "done two more musicals as well. I did 'Bring It On' and 'Fame', both with the same company". Although she "really didn't enjoy musicals" to begin with, Jenna feels as if she has

now changed this perception but enjoys the ‘behind-the-scenes’ work of a production than being on stage. Jenna has also participated in a range of other musical activities requiring a large amount of dedication such as performing with the Stage Choir at the Opera House, and in Southern Stars 2018. During the June/July school holidays of 2018, Jenna recalled having “Stars’ rehearsal [and] other than that it was just school work really”. This required “a few in school rehearsals, and then most of them now are just gonna be on weekends”, leading up to the performance in August. Additionally, Jenna has attended South Coast Music Camp “as a student for the past 4 years” and is “one of the few things I look forward to at the start of the year”. In 2018, Jenna attended South Coast Music Camp as a student tutor and was excited to “see the other side of how it works”. Mrs Maple encouraged her to fill out the required forms at school, noting Jenna’s skills in “staging, lighting, audio ... you know enough that I think your microphone technique would be worth noting in there, cause that’s valuable” that would support her application.

Although Jenna has participated in a range of out-of-school Music activities, her school-based opportunities in comparison were very limited. She had no memories of Music during Year 5 or 6, and indicated that her first taste of formal Music education came in Year 7. Jenna elucidated further on the difficulties she faced when trying to adapt to this new class structure; “it was hard because I had never picked up an instrument...there’s nothing based on singing in Year 7 ... it’s all guitar or keyboard...that was a struggle but I did learn quite quickly”. Jenna perceived Music as

... one of my favourite subjects at school” and is an important component of school-based learning “because music is in everybody’s life, whether it be ... just hearing it on TV or listening to music all the time or playing it themselves. It’s all very, very different for every person.

However, she appreciated that the significance of Music can vary depending on personal interest, expressing how she “think[s] it’s quite interesting but if you don’t have that sort of, interest in Music, I understand why it can be quite boring and not the most interesting class ever.” Jenna finds her own difficulties lie in “reading music and stuff like that because I really struggled with the notation in younger years because we had bad teachers, and I just wasn’t grasping onto it”. It is this lack of previous experience that she believes makes Music hard or easy for someone; “I do think that some things are harder than others just because if you haven’t

had exposure to them...like the viva voce, I've never done anything like that before". These experiences of difficulty and interest Jenna describes as varying between person to person, with play into the "personal preference" of a subject or topic area;

For me the content is interesting, and I enjoy learning about this sort of stuff, whereas I understand why people aren't able to. Because some people like science and stuff. I just don't...and I've got a friend who's going 4 of her 6 classes in science.

During Year 9 and 10, Jenna participated in Music, Drama and Sport electives, with her choice of Music influenced by a missed opportunity to attend Hazelnut High School of Performing Arts (HHSPA), and a desire to further develop her passions and interests in music; "back then I was like 'Oh yeah, I'm actually not that interested in it. I'd rather focus on school and stuff and just go to [a school] that's closer' and I'm still pissed at myself about that". She acknowledged that "because I said no, I've had so many more opportunities" but that it still factored into her subject choices; "part of choosing for Year 9 was the fact that I'd said no to HHSPA and I wanted to actually continue on with my Music because I had become a lot more passionate". Jenna emphasized how her selection was based on personal interest and motivation to participate, rather than being influenced by friends or teachers. She explained that it was "a huge passion of mine that I wanted to extend my knowledge of the theory side" and that interest in the content and "again the whole HHSPA thing" played into "want[ing] to do it for myself".

For HSC, Jenna chose "Music, Entertainment (VET course), General Maths, Advanced English, Business and PDHPE", where "Music and probably English, I'd say" are her favourite subjects. She clarifies that both subjects provide "a creative release in a way. Especially in analysing all the different texts and stuff like that". Jenna revealed that she is beginning to grow tired of Business Studies due her difficulty understanding the content-heavy topics; "It's so content heavy ... it's also the fact that I'm just not understanding any of it. And I'm just not getting anything". She is currently receiving "tutoring for Maths and Business" to support her learning, while her singing studio provides her with performance and Music-based guidance. She described the difference of having a competent teacher as "a shock to the system", and that she "now know[s] what parts of my mouth and my throat I'm using, so I'm like 'Let's change this to make the piece better!'".

Jenna had experienced both Mrs Maple and Mr Mahogany as teachers, along with the previous approaches of Mrs Aspen. She noted that they had “completely different teaching styles”; “Mr Mahogany couldn’t really control the class very well unless it was screaming ... whereas Mrs Maple is a lot more collected and calm about it, and she still gets the teaching done”. She found that Mr Mahogany made learning difficult at times “cause he’ll teach one thing and he’ll contradict himself by saying something else later on and then it’ll be like ‘Well, which one is it?’”. This was compounded by the fact that Jenna believes students in Year 7 and 8 were “too young” to grasp and appreciate the content, which did not suit the “laid back” teaching style of Mr Mahogany.

Jenna sees herself “absolutely” continuing with Music for her HSC Year 12 study “for the future really. I wanna be doing something in Music and having Music as a part of my HSC will be a step forward already”. She hopes that the effort being applied to develop her skills will show in her marks and achievement, stating “fingers crossed I think I won’t get below a band 5. I’m hoping, just because I’m putting so much time and effort into it”. Her future goals mainly revolve around ‘paying back’ her parents for the time and energy invested in her, with the money made from any career she decides to pursue used to buy each parent their own house; “I want to get somewhere. I want to make money for myself because my parents have done so much for me, I wanna give them what they’ve paid for...give them what they’ve given me”.

As for her future career intentions, Jenna revealed that “my life could go two completely different ways depending on what I want to do after school”, with ideas based in the Music and Sports Science industries; “I definitely want to be in the Music industry ... managing for bands or being a performer myself ... or if that doesn’t exactly work out, I see myself going into sport science”. While Music is her main interest, she expressed she would “honestly be happy with both”. She disclosed that her decision would be mediated by her grades, reflecting how “I reckon my marks will play a big part”, but went on to present a new career pathway in the defence force that she is also grappling with. After school, Jenna sees herself “tak[ing] a gap year and join[ing] the navy” to try out this career prospect before she “head[s] straight to uni”. Jenna is yet to decide definitively on what she will study at uni, tossing up between her interests in Music, sports science and medicine. She discussed wanting to attend Music performance colleges, revealing a scholarship placement upon the researcher’s final return to the site.



#### ***4.2.14 Mira (Year 11)***

Mira was a passionate soprano vocalist who described getting music stuck in her head “all the time ... lyrics, all the time”. She saw herself as “all about equality and fairness”, wanting to use her musical skills to “spread awareness and help others”. Mira expressed simply that she “love[s] doing Music, it’s like one of my favourite subjects”, and detailed that she “enjoy[s] it. It’s like one of the only things that I enjoy”. She recounted wanting to participate in “sport as a child, but I wanted to do soccer and my parents are old school. They’re like ‘Soccer isn’t for girls’ so then Music was” her other option. Mira discussed her reasoning for being involved in Music as something she “grew up” with; “I never knew that I could sing until I get into doing choirs and stuff”. She chose to participate in choir out of personal interest, and exposure through her sister’s involvement “when she was in primary school, so that was how I knew it”.

For Music in primary school, Mira disclosed “we didn’t do anything really. I think the only things that we did was choir and that’s all. We didn’t really have anything else based around Music”. This choir was taken by one of the primary teachers, with another teacher acting as an assistant who would help to split the group and practice harmonies. After having limited primary Music experiences, Mira was exposed to formal Music classes in high school. She recalls that she “had to do it for Year 7 and 8 and then I realised that I kinda wanna take Music as like a career”.

Mira came from a family of five, with an older “brother and sister” who “never did musical things, just sport...whereas I took a different path”. Mira felt as if her parents had “a lot” of expectations, indicating that “school-wise, they want me to do really, really well”. This was due to their history of immigrating to Australia from Serbia “18 years ago, so they didn’t know anything...they didn’t even know how to speak English”. Mira’s parents are “not really” from a musical background, with her “kinda stand[ing] out from the family, so it’s a good thing”. She explained how her parents had certain expectations of her to “get a good HSC and everything, go to uni and study ... then obviously like the whole ‘get married’, ‘have kids’, but they do want me to get married to someone that’s my religion”. When asked whether she believes she was meeting these expectations, Mira expressed “sort of, but in a way, no”, detailing the pressure she feels they place on her to ‘do better’ than her siblings; “they expected a lot from my brother finishing school which they didn’t get and they expected nothing from my sister which she pretty much achieved...they want me to go to uni ... become a teacher,

something I can do". Although she wants to pursue a Music career, Mira's parents are not overly supportive as "they know that Music's hard to get into, especially how you get into the Music industry" and how they "want [her] to have a backup plan". Despite her parents' somewhat unenthusiastic support of her future musical intentions, Mira indicated that "when it came to subjects [they were] like 'You pick what you want, it's got nothing to do with us'" which allowed her some freedom in her choices. She specified that the lack of musical background in her family made her enjoy the support of the school-based Music environment even further; "I've never had like a family member or someone that helps me out ... when I come [to school], I have a supportive group".

Mira revealed that she "chose Music because I love it. It's a passion of mine, and it's something I want to pursue in the future. I also enjoyed Music from Year 7 to 10". However, Mira expressed that Music was not a popular subject choice "because people don't enjoy it; they don't have a background with it". She also disclosed that "a lot of people look at Music as a bludge. You just learn to play an instrument. They don't see the whole side, like the other stuff too. They don't see that type of stuff". Mira revealed how she originally thought Music would be "more performance-based and then obviously getting into it, I realized that what was in it was a lot". This writing component she believes turns some people off of choosing Music as an elective because of the deeper understanding it requires; "others look at it like it's very much performance and learning how to play and instrument and then when it's not. They don't understand it...then it turns them off even more from it".

In Music, Mira perceives herself as "pretty good, I guess. I'm not like, up there amazing but like I think I'm good from where I've come from. From not knowing anything, from not having any background, I reckon I'd be going pretty good". She would also consider herself musical, "maybe not as much as others, but I would say I am". Mira expressed that she compares herself to her classmates and the vast range of abilities they hold, but that this encourages her to work harder; "I compare myself too much to the others ... I'm not that advanced in Music ... but I'm kinda like if I want it, I've gotta go for it. I'm not gonna let really anything stop me".

Currently, Mira is enrolled in "English Advanced, Society and Culture, Modern History, Music, Entertainment, Business and then I do Serbian outside of school". She intends on taking Music for Year 12, stating "I would like to continue to learn more about Music and gain more

knowledge that will benefit me in the future”, and anticipates “choosing 3 elective performances, to make 4 total for the HSC”. Her goals for this year include “do[ing] well in school when it comes to Music, like prelims and everything. And get[ting] a good grade, like report-wise, and hopefully start lessons”. Although Mira has never had singing lessons, she “hopefully” intended to in the future, but acknowledged the financial implications that this would bring to her family; “I really want to start but...like money-wise and stuff...it can be [expensive]. I’m trying to get a job ... perhaps they don’t have to pay completely, so I could help them out”.

Mira’s future career intentions revolve around studying Music and being involved in the Music industry; “I’m thinking about just going to a Music college and studying more ... doing more composition, hopefully learn an instrument; that’s something that I really want to do”. She elaborated that interest can influence the significance that Music as a subject has for an individual, depending on the future relevance that is perceived; “for me, it’s important to do well and achieve high ... if I was in Years 7 and 8 and I was doing Music, I think it’s good for you to try to do good in it because you never know where it might take you”. Mira explained the approaches of senior Music students as more important to “succeed and do well in Music”. She had hopes of being a “solo artist, but I really want to do something to get into the Music industry”. Mira linked this back to her personal interest in “helping people”, disclosing that “it’s not just about my music. It’s also like having an effect on people and helping people”. She revealed that even if she followed a different career path such as “journalism or be[ing] a midwife”, she would “still choose Music just because I love it ... it’s like the one thing I’ve had since I was a kid...it’s always in the back of my mind”. Mira reflected that the subject of Music “doesn’t [go] with the other [career] paths that I choose to go through but I think that it’s always going to have an impact on me”, emphasising the significant role it has in her life.

### **4.3 Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter presented individual summaries of the participants involved in the study. These were developed from the longer participant vignettes which were a culmination of data collected about each individual and created an initial step in the data analysis process. The descriptive summaries presented in this section introduce each participant, their relationship with Music and their related choices to develop their voices within the dataset. Significant quotes have been included here where appropriate, which may be repeated

elsewhere in the following results Chapters 5 and 6, to further explore themes and patterns. The next chapter will discuss the emergent themes from the data, with related quotes from participants to support analysis and interpretation.

## **5 Emergent Themes**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the emergent themes from the collected data set regarding the student choice of Music as a subject. Themes influencing subject choice and the student experience of Music included teachers, peers, interest, challenge, enjoyment, engagement and perceptions of future relevance.

### **5.2 Teachers**

Participants identified teachers as a factor that influenced their engagement and enjoyment of Music, but not the ultimate choice of students to pursue elective Music, or continue with music in the future. Three sub-themes emerged from the broader teacher theme, as factors that mediate the difference between teachers: the personal likability and personality of the teacher; their ability to design, manage and maintain the classroom environment; and the desire for students to reach a common understanding with their teachers in order to improve personal and learning relationships.

#### ***5.2.1 Teacher Likability and Personality***

Participants indicated that the personal characteristics a teacher possessed influenced how they perceived their teacher and therefore their ability to engage and interact in the classroom. Seven participants (Annie, Avery, Carly, Max, Liam, Grace & Isiah) stated that they liked their Music teacher, with six specifically mentioning Mrs Maple with phrases such as “I love Mrs Maple. She’s the best Music teacher ever” (Annie, 2018) and “Mrs Maple is amazing” (Avery, 2018). Avery further elaborated on how he liked his primary school choral teacher who was “really good at singing”, and eventually became his vocal coach and organiser of the Music Camp he attends annually. Five participants (Jasmine, Grace, Dean, James & Jenna) noted a difference between the Music teachers they had experienced. Jasmine discussed the differences between the teachers of Music and other subjects, while Jenna emphasised the difference that a properly trained teacher can make after taking lessons from experienced but unqualified vocalists. Grace also noted that Mrs Maple encouraged the class to play with different people, and experiment in different ensemble groupings. This was different to the approach taken in Mr Mahogany’s classroom, as Grace, Dean and James expressed that he would rather focus on practical than aural skills, paying attention to those who were already skilled and would defer to a ‘playing’ lesson when he could not control the class.

Another five participants (Annie, Carly, Holly, Max & Jenna) liked the teaching style of their Music teacher, with Annie and Carly specifically stating that they liked the approach of Mrs Maple in the classroom:

[Mrs Maple] just makes the lessons for me. She makes it more understanding, like I can come from her perspective. She just makes it more fun. With other teachers, they just say you have to do this and that's it and they don't really give you any guidance to become better, where [Mrs Maple] does. (Carly, 2018)

Holly discussed her preference for the individualised approach of the Music classroom, and noted that this kind of instruction suited her personal learning needs best:

I don't really get along with the teachers and I don't really like the way a lot of them teach, and stuff. Like, I'm more of a visual learner – like I learn if you were to sit one on one with me and explain. I learn better like that ... [but] I like the way [Mrs Maple] teaches. (Holly, 2018)

Max expressed the influence of his guitar teachers who encouraged him to explore and experiment on his instrument, and Jenna emphasised her recent developments in knowledge and understanding that have come from now being trained by a qualified vocal coach.

Five participants (Holly, Max, Grace, Isiah and Dean) discussed the influence of the teacher on their choice of subject, with three (Holly, Max and Dean) specifically noting the effect of Mrs Maple. Holly expressed that the teacher has a large effect on how she learns and whether or not she wants to attend school, while Max stated that he would “probably not” have taken Music if Mrs Maple was not the teacher. Dean indicated that the teacher has a small influence on his decision to stay in Music, however his subject choice was based on personal passion and interest:

The teacher was really good and one of the reasons I wanted to choose Music was cause I know there are good Music teachers here, but the main reason why I chose it was just cause I had a passion for it and cause I was interested in it. (Dean, 2018)

Grace discussed how she chooses subjects based on her relationship and ability to work with and learn from the teacher: “for me, I need to pick a subject based on my teacher cause if I don’t learn off them, then I’m not going to do very well” (Grace, 2018). Isiah expressed that he disliked his Timber elective subject because of the teacher, who was unsupportive and unable to communicate effectively with students.

Four participants (Jasmine, Alice, Max & Liam) also highlighted the difference in attitude and behaviour that students show towards casual teachers. Max and Liam were observed as respectful and attentive during lessons taken by Mrs Maple, although would lose focus and “talk back” when a casual teacher was taking their class, with Liam explaining that this “stops us from doing what we usually do” in a Music lesson. Jasmine pointed out that the work set for students by casual teachers was often perceived as not useful or relevant, with Mrs Maple often leaving musical find-a-words or comprehension activities to complete when she was not on class. Alice noted that casual teachers often find it difficult to control the class and were less knowledgeable about Music which made it hard for them to support or offer guidance to the students: “some teachers can’t really control the class well and then they just get so angry so quick, which makes students like, loose respect” (Alice, 2018).

Three participants (Holly, Avery & James) expressed that they preferred one teacher over the other. Holly and Avery both preferred Mrs Maple as a teacher, clarifying that having the same teacher consistently helps to maintain a continuity to the learning pathway:

I prefer having Mrs Maple because then it gives us grounds for like, you know... if we were to have a casual every single lesson, it would be really difficult to, you know, stay on track with the course while with having Mrs Maple, and she’s a really good teacher ... it’s better for keeping on track with what we’re learning and stay focused. (Avery, 2018)

James originally preferred Mrs Maple stating “I would honestly rather Mrs Maple than Mr Mahogany, as an opinion” (James, 2018), although changed this opinion during the member checking process to preferring Mr Mahogany (but did not offer reasons for this).

### *5.2.2 Classroom Environment and Management*

Participants indicated that a teacher's approach to and management of the classroom environment influenced their perception, engagement and enjoyment of the subject and their subsequent choice of Music as a subject. Six participants (Carly, James, Liam, Isiah, Dean & Avery) expressed that the teacher's ability to communicate effected their learning and understanding, not only in Music but in other subjects. Liam stated that the ability of the teacher to communicate effected his engagement in the classroom, while Carly noted the good use of classroom management strategies from Mrs Maple in the Music classroom which was vastly different to how teachers communicated with and managed students in other lessons:

[Mr Mahogany] yells a lot compared to [Mrs Maple]. She's calm and she makes it a better lesson ... it's more relaxing when it's quiet and stuff and when you have a teacher that's yelling everyone gets hyper or something. (Carly, 2018)

James felt like Mrs Maple was able to share her appreciation evenly amongst the class members, while Mr Mahogany would favour students with already-developed skills: "Mr Mahogany is obviously a good teacher, but I think he sorta takes his lessons if you're a really good player, you're more likely to be acknowledged more. Rather than Mrs Maple' general, like, appreciation". Isiah did not feel he was being taught by his Timber teacher, who refused to help or offer guidance when he needed it. Dean indicated that there was a shared responsibility between the students and teachers of learning and success in the classroom, which was mediated by a students' personal effort and the teacher's ability to communicate clearly and effectively:

If the teacher's like explaining it properly, that's one thing. Like in maths once I had a teacher who explained every single thing we did wrong, and everyone failed the test. So, it was the teacher's fault in that case. But with Music it's a bit harder, cause the teacher can explain the music and then when you come to explain it, like, the teacher might want a different explanation but anyone can explain music in a different way, cause it's how we interpret it, so it's like very based on your thoughts and how you feel you're good at Music. (Dean, 2018)



This was similar to Avery's experience, who noted that his Music Camp leader and Vocal instructor was able to explain concepts and terminology to him without being condescending or over complicating the language, which led him to liking the teacher: "she's really good at teaching and is able to make you understand without having to explain it. Like you're not ... what's the word ... like you're an idiot" (Avery, 2018).

Five participants (Jasmine, Carly, Holly, Grace & Jenna) discussed the atmosphere of the classroom which influenced their enjoyment and engagement in Music. Both Carly and Jasmine highlighted the different atmospheres and behaviour management techniques present between Mr Mahogany and Mrs Maple's classrooms, stating that Mrs Maple was more calm while Mr Mahogany tended to yell. They noted that Mrs Maple was more capable of controlling the classroom, which Jenna also expressed. Jenna added that she perceives Mrs Maple as more laid back because she views the students as friends and equals and compared her to the previous teacher, Mrs Aspen:

Mrs Maple is very much ... she's a lot more laid back than Mrs Aspen was, and she's in a way more friendly with the class. So, she interacts with us as if we were like her friends outside of school in a sense ... Mrs Aspen had aspects of that but it wasn't as "You guys are humans now you're not little children". (Jenna, 2018)

Grace emphasised the passion and encouragement offered by Mrs Maple, while Holly stated that she felt more comfortable in Mrs Maple's classroom and with her as a teacher: "She makes me feel more comfortable being in the classroom with her ... [Mrs Maple] understands me, that I have 'days'" (Holly, 2018). The organisation of the teacher was pointed out by four participants (Carly Avery, Grace & Mira), which included their feelings towards how activities were structured and implemented in the classroom. Carly noted that Mrs Maple facilitated more practical involvement, with Mira stating that she was able to set high yet achievable expectations for students. Grace felt Mrs Maple was more organised than Mr Mahogany, while Avery recalled bad memories of a history teacher who was underprepared and did not seem interested in teaching his class, which ultimately effected his view of the subject and teacher:

We used to have this teacher, did you hear about Mrs. Fig? She was really horrible to our class ... this was for history, and I like history! She was always really unorganized and what she would do, right? This happened to me several times. She would bring in one sheet of paper for the entire lesson, with like about maybe 5 questions on it. I would go off and do it on my own cause I knew it would take forever if I listened to every single thing that she said. And she would go on rambling about different things that didn't matter. And then I would look up and I'd realized she was still in the middle of the roll. It was boring ... She just didn't really seem very interested in you know, teaching us whatever. Because like she'd always come in with like just one sheet of paper to do for the entire lesson and it would be done in 5 minutes. (Avery, 2018)

Another four participants (Annie, Holly, Max & Avery) discussed the teacher's ability to understand their students, and to support their learning independently, which ultimately influenced environment and management strategies within the Music classroom. Annie noted that Mrs Maple helped to support and develop her students' understanding, with Max elaborating that Mrs Maple herself is understanding of her students and has a personal relationship and interest in each: "I prefer Mrs Maple' [style] because it's more involving ... we get a say in things, like if we're not enjoying something, we can say that and she'll understand" (Max, 2018). Avery felt as if he had found a good singing teacher because she was able to support his understanding without explicit over-explanation or use of a condescending tone. Holly stated that she felt like Mrs Maple understood her, but expressed dislike for her maths teacher who lacked understanding and empathy for the students:

My maths teacher, she doesn't understand that we're like teenage kids. If you tell us to be quiet, we're not gonna sit here and be quiet. She gets mad and I don't think she understands that like, you need to find another way to come across. Like if you're mad ... if you stand there and yell at us, we're not gonna listen to you. Teachers yell and they think that we're afraid of them but like, I don't ... like me personally, like if you stand there and yell at me, I'm just gonna hate you even more. And I'm not gonna listen to you. If you sit me down and you like, "What you're doing isn't okay" I'm gonna be like "Oh okay, like shit. I must not be doing the right thing". But if you sit there and yell I'm just gonna hate you, like what are you doing? I just hate you even more. (Holly, 2018)

Grace, Jenna, Mira and Isiah discussed the supportive nature of their teachers, and the influence that this had on their engagement and enjoyment of the Music classroom. Grace and Mira both found Mrs Maple to be supportive, with Jenna revealing a close relationship formed with Mrs Maple through her role as Head Teacher of Wellbeing:

Me, Mrs Maple, my Mum and my little sister are actually pretty close, cause with my little sister she's actually worse with anxiety than I am so being the welfare teacher, she's come into our family quite a lot. And so, I think she sees me as a good student because I respect teachers so I don't really muck up in class unlike some other people so I think it's just a case of being a good student really. She respects that. (Jenna, 2018)

Carly, Holly and Jenna specifically discussed the teacher's ability to control the behaviour and attitude of students within the classroom. Carly discussed the ability of Mrs Maple to manage and control the behaviour of students within the classroom, compared to Jenna who indicated Mr Mahogany's inability to manage his classrooms, yelling to maintain control and deferring to practical activities when students would not focus on aural lessons. Holly also noted how teachers influence the behaviour and attitude of students involved in each subject, highlighting how her own approach to Music was mediated by the personality and approach of Mrs Maple: "If you actually engaged with me, I'm going to have respect for you. And that's why I like Mrs

Maple because she sits down and it's not like she's one on one, but she knows us" (Holly, 2018).

Two participants (Annie & Jenna) discussed the strictness of classrooms, with Annie noting that other subjects had classes that were much stricter than Music, and Jenna expressing that the previous Music teacher, Mrs Aspen, was stricter in her approach than Mrs Maple:

Mrs Aspen was very good. She was very strict but ... that made the classes listen.

So, she was able to teach the class and then it was when we did prac, she was very helpful. (Jenna, 2018)

Annie stated that the teacher makes the lesson and the classroom more fun: "[Mrs Maple] makes the lessons for me ... she just makes it more fun ... it was something I could escape to after having a maths class or a stressful one that I just didn't like" (Annie, 2018).

### *5.2.3 Common Understanding ('same page')*

Participants were asked "If there was one thing that you wish teachers understood about being a student in the classroom, what would it be?" in the hopes of gathering data about how relationships could be strengthened within the learning environment. All answers indicated that participants desired to be on the "same page" as their teacher, with five main understandings to be reached; seeing students as individuals, appreciating their preference for practical activities, acknowledging the influence of external factors on school work, the knowledge that "kids will be kids", and accepting the limited memory of students. Five participants (Mira, Alice, Holly, James & Max) indicated their desire to be treated, viewed and educated as individuals. Mira, Alice, Holly and James all expressed that "each student is very different" (Mira) and learns at various rates, and therefore teachers should design their activities to meet the needs and skills of those involved:

Obviously, they have all been through school, but I wish they understood that we're all individuals and the way they teach us might not be the way that some people like to learn or some people understand. Sitting us in a classroom is like trying to teach fish how to climb trees and it's just like, you **can't**. I might not understand it as quickly as someone else. (Holly, 2018)

[Subjects] all run on a syllabus obviously. And they've gotta teach everyone the same way. And some people just are at different stages and some teachers don't see that. And they just throw the same information to everyone without simplifying or giving anyone more complexity if they're ahead. (James, 2018)

Max also pointed out that each student has their own specific genre interests, and using those in tasks and class activities would help to personalize the learning experience for students: "I wanna stick to heavy metal or thrash and stuff. But there was blues ... and I enjoyed that more, but it's sort of a big difference and it's not really what I enjoy" (Max, 2018).

Five participants (Dean, Annie, Carly, Jasmine & Liam) emphasised their preference for practical activities. Carly and Jasmine discussed their desire to play a range of instruments in the classroom beyond the guitar and keyboards offered currently, while Liam expressed that he wanted to spend more time playing than learning about music due to his already extensive background knowledge: "For me and Jamie, we wanna really spend as much time as we can playing music. It's important to know the history of Music, but it's also nice to prac or just do the music that you were shown" (Liam, 2018). Dean stated that musicology and aural were not interesting or relevant to him, so would prefer to play in class, which Annie also acknowledged, adding that "the 'doing' side which more people like ... instead of the more theory side of it" (Dean, 2018) helps to engage people in the lesson:

When we come, we just wanna 'prac it' kinda thing ... I guess sometimes when it comes to Music, we just wanna prac and just enjoy being creative, and that creative part of our heads start working cause in my day, I do business studies and society and culture which is all really focusing, buckle down kinda subjects so you gotta write heaps and understand heaps. And when you come to Music, I feel like I just wanna play guitar and just relax for a bit and just get my creative side flowing but sometimes we... when we do aural its just like, "Uh more work!" kinda thing. (Dean, 2018)

Isiah, Jenna, Mira and Avery discussed the influence of external factors on their ability to complete school work. Isiah noted the influence of his social life and friends outside of school

that were more fun and personally important than completing educational tasks and assessments: “they expect us to study all the time and stuff. And instead, we just always go out and stuff like ... I know we’ve gotta do work, but theory work and study aren’t all that fun” (Isiah, 2018). Mira indicated that jobs, social time and out-of-school sports also had their place in students’ lives outside of school, which affected her and her friends’ ability to complete work in a timely fashion:

The workload that we have outside of that subject as well as like, getting a job, social time, sports ... I wish that [teachers] understood that there’s so much more to us than just school ... there’s always stuff that’s going on outside of school that teachers don’t know about that it affects our school work. So, like ... health, family problems, friendship problems and all that stuff that sometimes the teachers might not think important but to us, obviously it is cause like growing up as teenagers, it’s not all just about school. It’s obviously about our friends and like, our health and we care a lot about that. A lot more than adults may think. And it’s like, I wish that that was almost something that they think about and that they care more, not just about our work, but just everything else. (Mira, 2018)

Avery and Jenna both discussed the pressures faced by students from school work, and how this affects a students’ mental wellbeing and anxieties. They reasoned that this was due to trying to find a balance between school and home life, and were often in the position of having to complete many assignments with the same due dates within a restricted time frame:

I have other things I do outside of school, like for example on Tuesdays we’re thinking of doing the band thing. Thursdays I have my drama class, Fridays I have Youth Group ... sometimes you just don’t do work because it’s like, it’s almost like ... you know like how rates for teens having depression and anxiety and stuff go higher and higher. It’s kind of like that, like sometimes you just can’t because you **can’t**. (Avery, 2018)

We have mental issues. So we need to be understood by that and the fact that we do have other classes. Like at the moment, I have honestly about 5 hours of work to do due at the end of the week, and I don't have the time to do that ... so it's a case of like "When do I get it done?". So I'm spending all night doing assignments and homework trying to get it done so that my stress doesn't come back and I'm not freaking out about anything else. (Jenna, 2018)

Two participants (Annie and Carly) indicated that teachers should understand "kids will be kids", and that since the students are still technically children, teachers should adjust their expectations accordingly. Annie expressed the desire to understand that students are "going to be kids. Like we're going to talk and we're going to be silly every now and then" (Annie, 2018) in class merely because they are children, and to work with these behaviours rather than fight them. Carly wanted teachers to understand that when students are asked to try their best, tasks often take longer to complete or require greater support than what an older student or adult might need for the same activity, and felt like some teachers did not appreciate the younger and developing nature of her peers:

We've been working on "Havana" but we're also working on another [song] so it's confusing. We have to do both, cause we do one in one lesson, and then the next ... we're just kids and ... they don't 'get', like some teachers they just want you to be like your best, but they don't get they're adults so they've gone through all of it so they're really good at it, but we're still learning. Like if we don't get it, they keep going. They keep going "Stop mucking around you haven't done this yet" ... like sometimes in class, they're like "If you don't get this done, you come back and you do it at lunch time" but you wanna take your time to get it right. (Carly, 2018)

Grace expressed a desire for teachers to understand that students will have trouble retaining information learnt "from five years ago", and that she needs help and support to revise and remember concepts.

### 5.3 Peers

Peers were noted as another external factor that influenced the engagement students had within the Music classroom, although did not influence the individual's ultimate choice to pursue Music as an elective or career pathway. Rather, their choice was based in personal factors such as enjoyment and interest in the subject. Participants noted the significance of the social atmosphere within the classroom, the various influences their peers have and their general perceptions of their friendship groups. Four main sub-themes emerged within the data collected on the effect of peers: the social atmosphere established; the influence (or lack of) that peers have on individual choices and behaviours; the acknowledgement that friends only participate in subjects they find personally interesting, relevant or enjoyable; and the abundance of creative but not musical friends within individual social circles.

#### 5.3.1 *Social Atmosphere*

The most significant sub-theme within 'Peers' to emerge regarded the social atmosphere of the classroom, established through the approach of the students in each Music class, and the specific composition and combination of those involved. Nine participants (Carly, Jasmine, Max, James, Liam, Jenna, Grace, Isiah & Dean) specifically stated that they had some of their social friendship group in the Music class with them. Jasmine and Carly, two best friends, would work and play with each other during each lesson, while Grace noted that she enjoyed playing with her friends in class. Max, James, Jenna & Isiah all simply stated that they had friends within the classroom, and Liam revealed that his friend in the class Jason, also taught him the basics of how to play guitar:

My friend doesn't go to this school, but he found a guitar on the side of the street.

And he just ... he just showed me, like, the simplest version of "Seven Nation Army" and I liked it so I got a guitar and then Jason taught me my first song which was "Fast Car". We performed that at a Merit Assembly. (Liam, 2018)

Dean suggested he had a few friends in the classroom, "but more of them are acquaintances than friends. I'm very specific when I come to friends" (Dean, 2018), going on to explain how selective he is about the people in his life. Five participants (Holly, Alice, Grace, Jenna & Avery) connected their favourite memories of music with a social experience, listening to or playing music with like-minded peers and friends. Holly recalled memories of friends, songs



and being in the moment, while Alice fondly remembered re-creating a concert in her lounge room with her best friend:

I have memories of when we were down the coast and we were all just sitting around ... I don't remember what song it was, something about friends being family, and you just take it in. Like "This is my life", like "This is who I am" and it's like a lot of realization ... I feel like music nowadays doesn't really do that. But if you listen to songs from when my Mum and Dad were growing up, like that type of music and you listen to it in certain moments. Like you've gotta find that right song for that right song and you listen to it and it's like "Oh my god this is what I've been looking for" but a lot of people don't realise that. And I just feel sorry for them. (Holly, 2018)

I love Harry Styles. He came to Australia about a month and a half ago, I didn't get tickets though. And I was so upset, I cried [laughs]. He is my celebrity crush. I love him so much. I cried. My cousin, who I said is my best friend; she's the best. We had a sleepover the night he was there. It was a Friday, and we dressed up like we went to his concert. And like, we put on some fancy clothes, and did our hair nice ... and put some jewellery on. And then we played ... she's not interested in him, but she's just such a good person, she did it with me. And then we, um, put on his music, like from a concert. Someone filmed his concert and put it on YouTube, so we watched that, and it was just really nice. And then, my other cousin ... my cousin Isabelle, her siblings got involved ... the little one who's 10, he dressed up as Harry Styles and he started singing some One Direction song or whatever. It was really nice, and that was a really good memory. I've got lots of pictures that we took of dancing and things ... so that was a day that I will remember. (Alice, 2018)

Grace's favourite memories stemmed from playing music with peers in the classroom, and Jenna and Avery both had favourite memories that evolved from their participation in the annual Music Camp:

They performed this song called ‘Sad Song’ by Bo Burnham. It was the funniest thing [smiles and laughs] because they’d brought these ridiculous costumes and everyone was just laughing, it was the funniest thing. And it was absolutely insane. And they’re all incredibly talented as well, which makes it even better. So, it was honestly one of the best nights of my life. (Jenna, 2018)

Five participants (Alice, Avery, Liam, Grace & Mira) stated that they enjoyed being involved with peers in the classroom, capturing the emotions associated with peer participation in Music. Grace, Liam and Mira all noted their enjoyment of playing with their friends during classtime, with Grace discussing Mrs Maple’ encouragement of playing with different people:

I’ve never had like a family member or someone that helps me out and tells me what I need to do like, what I’m doing wrong so then when I come here, I have a supportive group I guess in a way that help me out. That’s why I like ... I love doing Music, it’s like one of my favourite subjects. (Mira, 2018)

I just really like the Music atmosphere and I just enjoy the music and I enjoy the class and playing the piano with different people and new songs ... I enjoy playing as part of a group with classmates and learning different styles. (Grace, 2018)

Alice expressed her enjoyment of the atmosphere created in a Music classroom, while Avery felt like the peers in his class wanted to be there and therefore enjoyed being involved:

Music it’s more, I’m gonna say there’s less loathing of the subject when you go into a Music classroom. Cause people choose to be in Music rather than if you were in a maths classroom whereas people are like “I want to go! Now!”. Some things are to do with the teacher like you know, like getting students comfortable, making sure they’ve learnt everything properly and stuff. It would also have to be student attitude as well because obviously most people obviously really quickly find maths boring and annoying to do. Cause something for Music it’s more to do with passion. (Avery, 2018)

Four participants (Holly, Alice, Avery & Grace) discussed the comfortable and welcoming atmosphere of the Music classroom, with Alice describing it as a safe and non-judgmental environment, feeling “kind of safe amongst everyone. Like not really judged cause everyone’s pretty easy going in there” (Alice, 2018). Holly expressed feeling more comfortable in Music than in any other class, and Grace highlighted the social nature of Music and how she gets along well with the people in her class:

It depends sort of who was in the class, especially when we’re doing prac. It just makes it a lot better environment to be in cause a lot of my classes, if I didn’t have any friends in the class ... obviously it would be fun, like it would be good for a little bit but even sitting by myself knowing I have friends in the class makes it a lot more interesting. (Grace, 2018)

Avery posited that the atmosphere felt lighter in a Music classroom because people wanted to be there and could sense the passion of his peers who specifically chose Music to participate. One participant (Mira) noted that their friends were supportive of their singing aspirations and talent:

I’ve had none of my friends ever make fun of me for it or like, they’ve always asked me like “Why don’t you do singing lessons?” or they would be like [starting to smile] “Can you sing for me?” or when I’m singing they’ll like record me and be like “Oh my god she’s so good” ... kinda embarrassing but yeah ... when it comes to me, they’re very supportive and wanna see me do well. (Mira, 2018)

Holly found it difficult relating to her peers, and transferred electives due to an incident with fellow classmates in that subject:

I’m not a people person. And I cut myself off a lot from like other people’s lives and I like Music, cause it blocks out everything else. And like, I don’t only get along with people. I don’t know how to explain it, but I just don’t like people, overly ... I was in child studies but I actually, like ... this incident happened so I asked to get changed to Sport ... I don’t understand why if you didn’t wanna be in Music, if you don’t enjoy it, why pick it as a subject? (Holly, 2018)

### *5.3.2 Influence of Peers*

The influence that peers had on individuals also emerged as a sub-theme, with participants noting different effects on choice, behaviours and attention. Five participants (Annie, Carly, Max, Liam & Dean) noted how their peers did not influence the ultimate choice to pursue Music as a subject. Annie stated that her friends were not an influence on her final choice (“I would still do what I want cause I’ve got so much support surrounding me”), while Carly indicated that her intrinsic enjoyment of singing would keep her participating despite the opinions of others. Liam and Dean both expressed that they would still choose Music as a subject if friends were not in the class due to a deep personal interest in Music: “it wouldn’t really matter. Like, when it came to me choosing subjects, I was like ‘I wanna choose Music because I can play guitar’” (Dean, 2018). Max expressed that his friends had had no direct opinions on him taking Music as an elective, but that they made the classroom more enjoyable to be in: “My friends did tie into it. Like if they weren’t going to do it, I was still going to but it definitely did make it more enjoyable” (Max, 2018).

Jasmine, Carly and Isiah pointed out the distractions that can be caused by peers, which effects the engagement and ability to focus of the rest of the class. Jasmine noted that her brother’s engagement with Music was being influenced by his friends, while Carly and Isiah both reflected that peers in the classroom could be distracting when trying to concentrate:

When people are being loud in class, like sometimes the teachers don’t say “Stop!” so it makes it difficult ... I’m just saying this, and I hope they don’t hear this or anything but some of our friends kind of just like ... just don’t do it. They just muck around and bang on the keyboards and to some of them we’re like “Can you please tell the teachers?”. We really want them to stop, we wanna learn ... they just yell at them and they kind of don’t stop. They just keep going ... Sometimes people go to the bathroom to get out of it and I’m like “I would not miss it” ... some people came in late today cause they wanted to miss as much as they could. (Carly, 2018)

Two participants (Carly & Isiah) noted the opinions of peers, and how this influenced their own perceptions of, and choices related to Music. Carly could be influenced by the opinions of her peers, and wanted to seek out the perceptions of others to confirm or deny her talent:

I don't want to do something that I'm not good at. I wanna find something. If I were to put a vote as in like "Yes or No" and it was like most "Yes" then I would keep singing. But if it was like a "No", I would probably keep it to myself and do something that's more ... not so much performing. I've been on stage a lot cause I did dancing for like 8 years. Speeches I'm kinda nervous about cause it's weird, cause in class you talk a lot and you don't care. It matters what I think but ... I don't wanna go on stage and make a fool of myself. (Carly, 2018)

Isiah stated that he did not choose Music as an elective subject at his previous school because none of his friends were also taking the subject, and those that were involved far outweighed his perceived skill set:

I took [Music] to Year 8 and stopped. I didn't think any of my mates were doing it ... I didn't know much theory work to it and the class that was going to be going through was like, they all knew all the theory and had done lessons since they were like heaps little so I was lower cause I was like, bad ... It was more theory-based work...all my friends in the other school, they learnt all the theory work as well when they had lessons and they learnt from a young age so it was like a real like advanced, good class. And I was like, pretty behind on it all so I was like "Oh, I won't bother doing it". (Isiah, 2018)

### ***5.3.3 Friends Don't Participate Unless Personally Enjoyed, Interested and/or Relevant***

Six participants (Jasmine, Avery, James, Liam, Jenna & Mira) suggested that their friends only participated in subjects that they found personally interesting, enjoyable and/or relevant, which concentrated the population in elective Music classrooms down to the students who "wanted" to be there. Three participants (Avery, James & Liam) noted that their friends' choice of subjects was based in those they liked or enjoyed, with friends who "just didn't really sound like they liked the sound of [Music]" (James, 2018) or "maybe because they have other things that they enjoy and they've never really gotten into Music" (Avery, 2018). Three participants (Jasmine, Jenna & Mira) expressed that the choice of subjects was due to personal interest or Music "not really [being] their 'thing'" (Jenna, 2018), while one participant (Jasmine) indicated that her friends only choose subjects that are relevant to them.

### ***5.3.4 Creative, Not Musical Friends***

Annie and Mira indicated that they had a creative, but not musical friendship group. Annie had close friends such as Maddie and Molly, who were creatively inclined but not interested in Music, or pursuing it after high school:

Maddie, she loves drama so she's probably going to follow that lead, like drama. She's taking drama, marine studies and then I don't know what the other one was, I think it was photography. And then Molly, she's doing international studies, interior design and commerce, so we just have all these different ideas, like we want to go onto business studies, some people want to go onto drama. I don't ... probably some of my friends might take Music, but it's probably [not]. (Annie, 2018)

Mira stated that her friends were sporty and artistic, but not musical:

None of them are like ... creative or in like the Music sense. They're all very sporty or like art. Art and make up and that sort of stuff so none of them ... 'do' music. But they're very, very supportive. (Mira, 2018)

## **5.4 Interest**

The theme of 'Interest' emerged as a personal factor, directly related to personal characteristics, perceptions, experiences and relationships with Music that underpinned the engagement and enjoyment participants felt in the subject. Many participants also noted the significance of personal, intrinsic interest to their continuing choice of Music. Six sub-themes emerged within the interest data: personal factors and characteristics related to Music interest; thoughts, perceptions and beliefs related to the individual interest in Music; the personal musical involvement of individuals; the relationship between Music and Sport; participation in other outside activities; and previous experiences from primary and secondary school and the relationship with current experiences.

### ***5.4.1 Personal Factors and Characteristics***

The personal factors and characteristics present in each individual were noted as influences on their interest and attraction towards certain subjects. Eight participants (Annie, Holly, Max, Liam, Jenna, Mira, Dean & Avery) discussed the interest shown and support offered by their

families as an influence on their ultimate engagement and choice. Max, Dean and Avery described how their parents show their support and interest by attending performances, while Mira noted that her parents encouraged her to pursue Music as a hobby over soccer as it “isn’t for girls”: “I wanted to do sport as a child, but I wanted to do soccer and my parents are old school. They’re like ‘Soccer isn’t for girls’ so then Music was [my option]” (Mira, 2018). Liam’s parents encouraged him to participate in Music from a young age, sending him to a Music school where he learnt piano and Music theory. He now has a Music studio in his house, sponsored by his parents, to allow him to practice, create and record music:

Probably most afternoons after school I go to my Music room ... I’ve got a keyboard, it’s a Korg, and it’s got the stand and everything. And then I’ve got my guitar, my kapos, my picks [gesturing to different areas around the space as if he were in his Music room] all next to it. I got my Akai MIDI keyboard so it’s basically the small one and it has a drum pad up the top. Got that. Got a few speakers, and my computer. (Liam, 2018)

Annie and Jenna noted that their parents and families acted as a strong support network, with Jenna stating her continued participation would be dependent on parental support: “I’m very much Mummy and Daddy’s little girl so if I didn’t have that support, I don’t think I’d find the inspiration and the will to continue doing it” (Jenna, 2018).

Eight participants (Jasmine, Carly, Holly, Alice, Liam, Jenna, Mira & Dean) described a personal interest and affinity for Music and their instrument. Jasmine and Carly both expressed innate interest in the piano, while Jenna found Music personally relevant and interesting:

For me the content is interesting and I enjoy learning about this sort of stuff whereas I understand why people aren’t able to. Because some people like science and stuff. I just don’t. I hated science, absolutely hated science. And I’ve got a friend who’s doing 4 of her 6 classes in science. And I was like “That is ridiculous” [laughs] – she absolutely loves it so it’s just a case of personal preference really. (Jenna, 2018)

Holly discussed being interested in Music as it blocked out “other things going on”, with Liam linking his personal identity with his musical skills and interests: “I play a lot of music...any

sort really, probably Pop is where I know the most songs from [but] it changes really from week to week” (Liam, 2018). Alice and Dean both thought innate interest was a determining factor in being perceived as “musical”:

[It’s] their interests in Music. So with me, I’m passionate about listening to Music, playing it. Everything like that, whereas someone who ... if they’re listening, I find if someone who was listening to music and wasn’t enjoying it, wouldn’t really be a musical kind of person. (Alice, 2018)

I guess they’re just like really attached to Music. They can like connect the voice, like the instruments together really well. Like me, I can kinda ... I can make lyrics, I can play guitar, but I can’t really sing. I can’t really put it altogether. So it’s kinda like ... I think someone really musical is someone who can put it all together and really control, really push it out. (Dean, 2018)

Mira expressed that her long-standing interest came from innate curiosity, along with early choir experiences in primary school:

I didn’t grow up in a like real musical family or anything like that. When I was younger, I did choirs at school and loved it and went for a solo part and people started telling me how I could sing really well and that’s when I started, like, taking it more seriously ... I grew up always listening to music and like always in the car, in the back, like Mum used to tell me that “Oh you used to sit in the backseat of the car and sing to everything” and like I said, I never knew that I could sing until I got into doing choirs and stuff and I just loved it. (Mira, 2018)

Six participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Holly, Grace and Dean) came from families that were creatively inclined, but not necessarily identified as musical. Holly’s family was creative, with the only musical member being a godparent who taught her brother to play guitar. Grace also noted the musical skills of her father who passed on his interest in piano, but the rest of her family was classed as more creative:



Dad plays a piano. So he was, I always used to fight with him cause on Sundays that was the day he would always used to go through piano with me. So, I used to argue with him a lot on the piano. But I look back on the pieces now, and I think “That was so easy. Why did I argue about that? Why couldn’t I not get that?” [laughs]. But no, Dad’s musical, not as good as he used to be, cause he doesn’t play anymore obviously. But he was always able to just sit on the piano and pick it up. Mum, not so much. She has rhythm, but she can’t play the piano or an instrument or anything. Where my sister has rhythm but she uses it in dance. (Grace, 2018)

Dean’s family had some background experiences, but he did not consider his parents overly musical, while Annie, Carly and Jasmine all expressed their families were creative but not musical: “I wouldn’t say they’re musical, but they’re still very creative” (Annie, 2018).

Four participants (Avery, Mira, Isiah & Dean) described being self-taught, teaching themselves how to play a particular instrument through YouTube or experimentation. Avery had formal voice lessons, and after a ukulele workshop run at the annual Music Camp, decided to take up ukulele as an extra instrument:

At South Coast Music Camp last year ... there’s like these workshops that everyone has to go to and then you do a certain thing in it and ... me and my friends all decided to go for the ukulele one. We learnt 4 chords; that’s all we learnt. And then we learnt a four-chord song and then like it was like a bunch of songs put together that all ... had the same four chords, which was C, F, Am [and] G ... and then, that’s all I had and then when I got home I was like, begging my parents to get me a ukulele ... I got it for Christmas, which was like 3 months later. (Avery, 2018)

Avery continues to teach himself using tablature and fret diagrams, along with watching YouTube videos. Mira is a self-taught vocalist who has never taken lessons but participated in a range of school choirs, while Dean and Isiah are both self-taught guitarists. Dean describes his self-learning technique as being supported through online resources:

I watched like two YouTube videos and I got bored of them so I ended up just figuring out that ... like in Music [class], I listen that each fret is like a number and each string is a thing and I learnt that and then I guess I took that knowledge to guitar TAB online, and just like found all the TAB and figuring out how to play it. And then chords, I just learnt a few chords in like Year 7 and 8 and then came to learning all the chords ... if I ever got a song and I didn't know the chorus, I'd just look it up. it's pretty easy...if I go to church nowadays and there's a chord that I don't know. Look it up real quick on Google, give it a play, hear it on the piano and see if it matches. (Dean, 2018)

Four participants (Holly, Alice, Avery & Isiah) expressed personal factors influencing how they relate to other people. Two participants (Holly & Avery) stated they had difficulties relating to and understanding their peers. Avery suggested he is “not really good at reading social clues and figuring out what other people are thinking” (Avery, 2018), while Holly indicated that her inability to relate to her peers made it difficult to learn and maintain focus. Due to social issues and disagreements, Holly not only had to move elective subjects but “was suspended for the majority of Term 2” and had moved to 5 different schools to try and find the right learning environment:

I didn't really have a good primary school experience ... I was really badly bullied from year 4 to 'bout ... beginning of Year 6 from the same people ... I remember at Almond Primary School, I used to stand at the gate and just cry and the principal used to come and have to bring me into school every morning and she'd always walk me into school and sit in my classroom with me for about 20 minutes to make sure I wouldn't leave. (Holly, 2018)

Alice described herself as social (“I just like being around people”), while Isiah suggested that although he was quiet in class, he spent most of his free time out of school “hanging out with my friends a lot” (Alice, 2018). Furthermore, Avery came from a musical family, with both parents participating in some form of Music throughout their lives, and a father as a trained opera singer:

So, you know how I have a really different, higher big [vocal] range? That comes from my mother definitely. So, my Mum was a soprano and she trained herself down to go into alto ... so she used to be able to do the entire range between soprano and alto ... my Dad was an opera singer, like he was going to be a proper opera singer. It's just his opera teacher died like, just ... and he had to quit opera because ... my parents were having my brother and then he had to do work and stuff and it just was too much to get a new teacher to teach him opera ... he just does engineering [now]... he sings in the shower a lot. (Avery, 2018)

One participant (Isiah) discussed coming from a non-musical family, with “two brothers, both younger” who “both like sport” such as “motorcross, mountain biking, surfing...just any sport” (Isiah, 2018). One participant (Grace) expressed having performance anxiety which “has always been an issue” and affected their want to continue with Music:

I want to drop something because I want the free subject. 13 units is too much, but I don't know what I'm going to drop yet. Where I'm tossing up Music is ... just because I hate performing. It's that part of it, and because it's compulsory and no matter what I do, I've always been like it. It started to get worse as I got older. I mean, I always hated it. I remember my first eisteddfod when I was 10. I was nervous ... I stuffed up and I said “oops” and then I got 3rd, which is okay. But after that, that's when other people started to practice more and more and that's when all my other commitments just came on top of things ... my songs were probably up to where theirs were but not when I was able to perform it. It was always so much lower. (Grace, 2018)

#### ***5.4.2 Thoughts, Perceptions and Beliefs***

This sub-theme examined the thoughts, perceptions and beliefs that participants held towards Music that involved their level of personal interest. Four participants (Annie, James, Grace & Jenna) indicated that their choice of Music was directly related to the future relevance and value ascribed to the subject. Annie and Grace indicated that their subject choices aligned with future goals and interests:

I was thinking about Cooking, cause I really like Cooking. Cooking's a "thing" now I love doing. I was going to take Photography cause I love taking pictures ... I'm not sure what I wanna do on my third choice. I'm still thinking about it cause I may wanna do business studies or something to help me when I'm older. (Annie, 2018)

I chose Sport because that was with the period of time that I thought I might want to become sort of physio. Cause I kinda want to go to something health related when I leave school ... and Sport is just, it pretty much leads on to Year 11 and 12 PDH; what I'm doing now. So, it was a good, like, stepping-stone for me and I really find that stuff interesting and I love sport so extra sport. (Grace, 2018)

James's choice of subjects directly related to his goal of pursuing a military career, while Jenna perceived a utility value in Music, so her creative interests usually took precedence over her other interests:

I tend to choose the creative side. I see a future in that. Whereas in sport, I don't. I'm doing it to keep fit and I'm doing it to keep my stress levels down while I'm going through this stage. (Jenna, 2018)

Two participants (Max & Grace) explained that their choice of Music was based on personal interest. Max suggested that interest determined his enjoyment and therefore choice of Music ("I really enjoy it...that's what I want to do with my life, just cause of how fun it is and I can make a living doing something I like" (Max, 2018)), while Grace noted that her elective choices aligned with things she found personally fun and interesting. James also noted that his interest determined the amount of effort applied and time spent on activities:

I really wanted to be more musical and I wanted to sort of like, just learn more, rather than just playing ... I just wanted to learn some music and different instruments ... If you're not committed and I guess you'd say lazy, I don't think you'd get very good as a musician or whatever instrument you play. I mean, if you put enough commitment and you're committed obviously, I guess you can play whatever you strive to do. (James, 2018)

Annie identified Music as neither her favourite or most important subject.

### 5.4.3 Personal Musical Involvement

Data related to personal musical involvement revealed the practical manifestations of each individual's personal interest in Music, including whether or not they had taken formal instrument lessons, experiences with Music outside of school, their level of previous experience and access to instruments in their home. Table 5.1 details the nine participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Holly, Alice, James, Mira, Isiah & Dean) who had never taken formal instrument lessons, specifically in piano, guitar or voice.

**Table 5.1**

*Participants not involved in formal instrument lessons*

Year	Participant	Instrument	Lesson Status
8	Annie	Keyboard	No private lessons – only school-based/in-class guidance from teacher
8	Jasmine	Keyboard	
8	Carly	Keyboard	
9	Holly	Keyboard	
9	Alice	Keyboard	
9	James	Keyboard	
11	Mira	Voice	Taught some basic chords by family member, but mostly self-taught
11	Isiah	Guitar	
11	Dean	Guitar	

Table 5.2 details the five participants (Avery, Max, Liam, Grace & Jenna) who discussed taking formal instrument lessons at some point in their lives. Max, Jenna and Liam currently participate in lessons, while Avery and Grace were not taking lessons at the time of the study.

**Table 5.2**

*Participants involved in formal instrument lessons*

Year	Participants	Instrument	Lesson Status
9	Avery	Ukulele & Voice	Used to take group voice lessons, but became too expensive so now teaches himself
11	Grace	Piano	Used to take piano/theory lessons, but became tedious and no longer enjoyable
9	Max	Guitar	Takes private guitar lessons once per week
9	Liam	Piano & Guitar	Takes private piano lessons once per week, and teaches himself guitar
11	Jenna	Voice	Used to take private voice lessons, and now participates in group lessons after being financially supported by her family

Both Avery and Jenna mentioned how expensive private instrument lessons were, and that financial restraints from their families had caused them to stop participating at some point:

I started singing in about Year 2 but then I got lessons in Year 6 to 7. I had lessons for two years ... we couldn't really afford it anymore cause I had drama lessons and singing lessons ... so then I had to pick one, and I chose drama. (Avery, 2018)

I started singing when I was in Year 3 actually. So, when I started choir, that's when I was like "Oh, I actually enjoy this. Let's continue this!". They were half an hour a week, yeah. So, I did a private lesson for the first year with a drama class and then I did a private lesson and a group lesson ... There was a bit of a rough patch between last year and the year before, mainly in the year before where we didn't have the money for singing lessons, where we had to ask my grandparents for money just because they didn't want me to stop ... Being my parents, they're obviously going to be supportive but my Mum told me a while ago that just because she's my Mum, she can still see potential in me. So, I was like "Oh, alright" so that's why we did it ... I sobbed after that. (Jenna, 2018)

Four participants (Avery, Max, Jenna and Dean) mentioned that they participated in extracurricular Music activities outside of school, that were not directly related to formal instrument tuition. Avery, Max and Dean all were involved in bands of varying genres, while Jenna had been a part of several stage productions, vocal ensembles and choirs:

"Camp Rock" is honestly one of the best experiences I've had. And the studio I'm at now, the head teacher came into the show and was like "Yo, let's do some actually coaching during the show" and so I'm now with him at his studio. I've done two more musicals as well. I did "Bring It On" and "Fame", both with the same company ... I did a state choir ... the state choir ensemble that performed at the Opera house last year, which was insane. [smiling] It was three days of just ... note bashing to get everything into your head. It was absolutely insane but it was so much fun at the same time. (Jenna, 2018)

Carly, Alice, Avery and Liam specifically discussed having instruments available to play in their homes. Carly described how she had a keyboard growing up, but it was removed as no one in the family used it anymore. Alice had a keyboard, Avery had his own ukulele and Liam had access to his own Music studio that his parents help him set up within the home. This included a range of guitars, keyboards, percussion instruments and recording equipment.

Holly, Liam and Mira discussed previous experiences that influenced their current interests and attitudes towards education. Holly described a long history of being ‘left behind’ in education, not learning how to read, write or spell properly until late primary school:

I didn’t learn how to read and write until I was in Year 5 ... So, the way they explained it to me, they explained it to my Mum, was that I had missed a whole section and it wasn’t cause I had any time off school. It was just the fact that my brain just didn’t remember that whole like ... it’s pretty much a whole 2 years of my primary school. I had to [re-]learn in a year, cause they didn’t pick up on it until Year 5 and Year 6. So, they taught me this whole section of my primary school in a series of short time and it was over two teachers and it was like ... they’d pull me out of class when we were doing Catholic Studies or something like that; something that didn’t matter. I’m not missing anything, and then I go for an hour, hour and a half and just literally I learnt basic reading and writing. They literally started me from Kindergarten, and they were like “Okay, over this next year we’re gonna teach you from Kindergarten to work and we’re gonna work up”. So, then my brain would, like, instead of skipping ... would pick it up and just made it a lot easier for me to learn that. (Holly, 2018)

Liam recalled an early exposure to musical theory and playing the piano through his enrolment in a Music school when he was growing up in Ireland, and suggested that he enjoyed activities the longer he had been involved in them:

I started Music at age 4 [playing] piano. I went to this Music school where I learnt like, sorta like what a crotchet is ... all the theory stuff and played a bit, and then I

did that until I was about 7 or something, cause then I had to move to Australia ... I've been doing martial arts for about the same as Music. I just started soccer maybe 5 years ago, and ... I actually used to do basketball a few years ago but I quit ... I was in Year 3 and they were all in Year 6 and I never got the ball ... So, I probably find martial arts and soccer a bit more enjoyable cause I've been doing it longer.

(Liam)

Mira suggested that a level of interest, and previous experience which supported background understanding, were needed to learn and adapt in Music.

Obviously, my opinion will be different from someone who's not interested in it. I personally love it cause like I've learnt so much from it ... if I'd have never studied [Music], I probably wouldn't know anything about it, probably wouldn't have had an interest, wouldn't have wanted to like, go further with Music than others. When it comes to others that aren't really interested in it, I don't know how they feel about it. I think that people that aren't like us that want to do Music, I reckon they probably think that it's like a bludge but at the same time it's probably too hard for them.

(Mira, 2018)

Avery and Jenna recalled their continued participation in the region's annual Music Camp. Avery had attended the camp for the past 4 years, with some of his favourite musical memories coming from these experiences, and he hopes to be a student tutor in future. Jenna also attended the Music camp for several years prior, and returned as a student tutor in 2018.

#### ***5.4.4 Relationship Between Music and Sport***

This sub-theme demonstrated the relationship between participation in Music and Sport, as described by the students. Six participants (Jasmine, Carly, Holly, James, Grace & Jenna) discussed their affinity for both Sport and Music. Grace and Jenna specifically mentioned being torn between their interests in Music and their respective Sports:



[Music's] always something that is there. It's an option [just] never really pictured.

Cause when I first started, the piano was always a hobby for me and then, where my netball was always that one that I did go to. (Grace, 2018)

I've got two completely different sides. I've got the creative side and then I play hockey. It's so worldly apart. I sing, I act and then I started to dance which is horrible, then I was competitively swimming for like, 4 years. I've been playing hockey for my entire life. I've played rugby, tennis ... what else have I done? I've played soccer and then it's just so much on the [sport] side and so much on the [creative] side. (Jenna, 2018)

Jenna stated that her Musical activities usually took precedence as she saw future value in the associated skill, while Grace indicated that piano was more of a hobby and her interest in netball came first. Jasmine and Carly both participated in soccer outside of school, but liked school Music. James described himself as sporty, but not creative, although indicated an interest in Music. Three participants (Liam, Grace & Jenna) were involved in both sport and Music activities outside of school. Liam had been involved in piano, soccer and martial arts for many years, which added to his enjoyment of these activities. Grace took piano lessons and was on a netball team, while Jenna participated in a range of stage productions and ensembles, took vocal lessons and was on a hockey team, however "had to stop for this year due to injuries, but I'm hoping I can play next year, cause we're hoping to get our original team back. It's gonna be really exciting" (Jenna, 2018).

#### ***5.4.5 Outside Activities***

Participants discussed other types of activities (apart from Music and Sport) that they were involved in outside of school. Two participants (Carly & Mira) took dance lessons, with Carly participating when she was younger but not currently, and Mira taking Serbian dancing and language classes that aligned with her HSC course of study. Two participants (Jasmine & Avery) discussed involvement in drama classes outside of school, with Jasmine being previously enrolled in private group lessons, and Avery still currently participating:

I like Music because of the control but I like Drama because of the freedom ... So, like in Music you'd be controlled over what you do, cause otherwise it doesn't sound good. While in drama you're supposed to be moving freely and figuring out different ways of doing things. (Avery, 2018)

#### ***5.4.6 Primary/Secondary Previous Experience and Relationship***

The relationship between experiences of formal Music education in primary and secondary school was highlighted by participants. Table 5.3 details the eleven participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Alice, Avery, Liam, Grace, Jenna, Mira, Isiah, Dean) who recalled memories of Music from primary school. Eight participants (Jasmine, Carly, Angelia, Avery, Grace, Jenna, Mira & Isiah) had memories of choir and singing experiences, while another two (Avery & Grace) had recorder activities. Two participants (Liam & Dean) recalled no Music being taught to their classes at all, and one (Alice) discussed some basic experiences with untuned percussion.

**Table 5.3**

*Participant memories of Primary School Music activities*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Memories</b>	<b>Primary School Music Activity Details</b>
<b>Annie</b>	Anecdotal	Recalls Year 3 teacher playing a 'Beatles' song to set the time frame for setting up and packing down the room
<b>Jasmine</b>	Choir	-
<b>Carly</b>	Choir	Noted a desire for more foundational experiences in instrument playing in primary school
<b>Alice</b>	Choir, Percussion	Remembers singing and some basic untuned percussion activities, but believes this has improved from current accounts by her cousin
<b>Avery</b>	Choir, Recorder	-
<b>Liam</b>	None	No memories of classroom Music, or music being played apart from the school bell
<b>Grace</b>	Choir, Recorder	-
<b>Jenna</b>	Choir	Began singing in Year 3 after being inspired by her choir involvement
<b>Mira</b>	Choir	-
<b>Isiah</b>	Choir	-
<b>Dean</b>	None	Identified himself as a member of "the forgotten class", and recalls other classes learning the recorder
<b>Holly</b>	Percussion	Only recalled simple percussion, such as the "clapping sticks...and shaker things" but had no relation to high school Music
<b>Max</b>	Recorder	Noted that lessons were not very interesting
<b>James</b>	None	-

Eight participants (Jasmine, Carly, Alice, Grace, Jenna, Mira & Dean) noted the significance of their school Music experiences to encouraging their interest and continued involvement. Six participants (Jasmine, Alice, Jenna, Mira & Dean) stated that school Music specifically sparked their interest in playing a particular instrument, with Jenna and Mira specifically linking to primary choir activities. Grace also believed that school Music played an important part in her continued involvement, as it reignited her passion for playing ‘fun’ music at a time where piano was becoming less enjoyable and more of a chore:

I was tossing up and it was like “If it’s anything like Year 7 and 8 Music, I don’t want to do this”. I was like “This is so boring”. It’s like I originally didn’t pick Music for Year 11 because ... I was a bit unsure. Cause my plans for Year 10 were like...‘don’t have to worry about the piano’ when I was still going through that stage where I don’t like performing. Music’s getting more of a chore, I just want to drop it. But then it was when, at the end when we started to do our mash-ups and...we had to make like a song, like a rap and thing and we used to do that together. That’s when I started to really enjoy Music and was like “Oh, I’m gonna change” ... playing the piano suddenly got [fun]. I liked learning new songs, so it wasn’t a chore anymore. (Grace, 2018)

This was similar to Liam’s experience, who explains that Year 7 and 8 Music opened his eyes to playing different kinds of repertoire:

I did lessons and actually doing Year 7 and 8 Music prompted me to continue Music even more cause I used to find piano lessons pretty boring cause I never played songs. We just played this thing out of a booklet. And it was really boring. And then, when I started playing here, just whatever I wanted. (Liam, 2018)

Dean also mentioned choosing Music for an elective because his Year 7 and 8 experiences made him want to keep participating in order to develop his skills further:

When I was playing guitar in Year 7 and 8, I started getting good at electric. They had like a Year 8 band kind of thing, and like they asked me to play bass in it. So, I played bass in it, I got bored of bass and no one was playing electric guitar. So, I was like ‘You know what, I’ll play electric guitar’. So, I did and then someone else came and played bass, and I was like ‘Okay, this works’. And I got good at it and we did a couple of performances of like 7 Nation Army and we did ... a Michael Jackson song and I was like “Okay, I like this, I’m good at this” and then like it carried on to Year 9 so I kinda just went like “Oh okay, I’ll just choose Music for Year 9 then” ... I stuck with Music for Year 10 as well. And then after Year 9, that band kinda faded and we didn’t do it anymore and I got into Year 10, and in Year 10 I was just like “Right, well I’m still enjoying like making my own Music kind of thing and like playing guitar, so I’ll just go to Year 11 and 12 and hopefully keep going”. (Dean, 2018)

Five participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Isiah, & Dean) noted that their first formal experience of Music education was in secondary school during Years 7 and 8. Jasmine and Dean both connected these experiences with their current interest in Music. Carly expressed the importance of delivering Music education in this setting, as she would not have the opportunity to develop these skills elsewhere:

We can play soccer out of school, and you can do piano as well cause it’s at school.

But if we didn’t do it at school, you have to pay for piano lessons, and we’ve got too much to do. (Carly, 2018)

## **5.5 Challenge**

The concept of ‘challenge’ emerged as a theme that influenced student engagement in the classroom, along with their choices, attitudes and behaviours. Challenge was considered as a scale of difficulty, with participants expressing their own self-concept, along with how ‘hard’ they perceived Music to be and why. Three sub-themes developed from participant views: personal self-concept in Music; perceptions of difficulty associated with Music and related tasks; and mediators of difficulty.

### *5.5.1 Self-Concept in Music*

The personal self-concept of participants was expressed as contributing to the level of challenge each faced in Music. Two participants (Liam & Mira) indicated that they were musically skilled. Liam stated that his developed knowledge was due to him learning piano and Music theory from a young age. Mira compared herself to her classmates, and although personally assessed herself as less skilled, she indicated that this pushed her to work harder to develop her understanding:

I compare myself too much to the others where I'm kinda like "They all can do this" and like I can't. I'm not that advanced in Music. So, I kinda feel like I would struggle a little bit, but I'm kinda like if I want it, I've gotta go for it. I'm not gonna let really anything stop me. (Mira, 2018)

Liam and Grace had some level of boredom in the Music classroom, associated with their extensive previous knowledge related to their background experiences. As most tasks were aimed at the average skill level of the class, and their understanding was more advanced, Liam and Grace became bored with Year 7 and 8 Music.

Isiah and Dean specifically highlighted their reliance on auditory skills and playing by ear, rather than reading music. Another five participants (Mira, Alice, Holly, Max & Liam) were observed using auditory skills such as listening, experimenting and mimicking to produce performance pieces rather than reading musical scores or tablature during practical classes. Holly noted having high achievement in Music at her previous school, where the classes were more based in musical theory than performance:

I got an A in both my exams but like it was a lot more theory than prac ... I reckon I learned how to play like 1 song, and then I came here and I learnt so many different things and their classrooms, you'd walk in there and you wouldn't think you're in a Music room. Like they have the soundproof-ed rooms. Like there's 4 in each Music 'thing'. And there's like a piano in each 'thing' but ... it's a lot more writing ... We had like one assessment task and it was to play "Piano Man" and that was the only song I learned while I was at Cashew Catholic School. So, like here it was like a lot different. (Holly, 2018)

Max also noted having an average self-concept, stating “I wouldn’t say I’m good, but I wouldn’t say I’m bad”.

#### *5.4.2 Perception of Difficulty*

Participants indicated a range of perceptions related to the difficulties they face in Music. Five participants (Max, Grace, Jenna, Isiah & Dean) noted the difficulty of aural, listening and musicology activities. Isiah expressed that “a good understanding of Music or liking the music I feel like helps you a lot more” (Isiah, 2018), and Jenna also believed that the challenge in these tasks came from a lack of previous experience and knowledge:

For me, it was hard because I had never picked up an instrument and being a vocalist in Year 7 ... there’s nothing based on singing ... it’s all guitar or keyboard [indicating two options with hands outspread]. So, that was a struggle, but I did learn quite quickly, which was easy ... I do think that some things are harder than others just because if you haven’t had exposure to them ... like the viva voce, I’ve never done anything like that before. (Jenna, 2018)

Grace recognised the struggles of her peers and their preference of practical activities due to their lack of experience:

I don’t mind writing, I’d prefer to just write. But a lot of people in the Music class, they don’t really like writing cause ... I do all writing subjects, they don’t. That’s why I find a lot of them hate theory or aural and listening and all that kind of stuff cause it’s all writing based where I find if they had a guitar to pick up, play a tune, make up a little tune and then write about, I’d find they’d find it a lot more interesting. (Grace, 2018)

Dean described the difficulty of the writing component of Music, which he believed could influence the final choice of his peers.

Four participants (Annie, Grace & Dean) described Music as different to their other subjects taken. Although Annie no longer is enrolled in school-Music, she explained that “I liked it. It was something I could escape to after having a maths class, or a stressful one that I just didn’t

like” (Annie, 2018). Avery and Grace stated that Music acted as a break from their more stressful subjects:

All my classes are super study based while Music’s just the one where I can just relax and do something that you know, helps me clear my head and stuff. It would be easy to have like a class that, you know ... isn’t like the hardest thing in the world for me. (Avery, 2018)

Dean suggested that the difference came from having to rely on personal skills rather than context or text-based knowledge:

[In English], you can just smash [answers] out from that text and with quotes, you can remember quotes. But with Music, it’s hard to remember what you wrote about something. Cause the next time you hear it, you could be in a totally different mindset and hear it differently. (Dean, 2018)

Avery, Liam and Grace found certain musical tasks relatively easy, due to their previous experience and background knowledge. Liam stated that he did not find Music activities difficult unless it was concerned with “areas where I dislike or I’m not too familiar with... I’m not really a big fan of classical. I don’t find the classic side interesting. That’s basically it. And, a lot of theory” (Liam, 2018), and Grace found aural components of the class easier than playing due to her extensive background knowledge.

Holly, Grace and Dean indicated that playing Music was difficult. Grace linked this with her performance anxiety, while Dean explained that the particular piece he was playing would mediate the difficulty: “[it’s easy] if I’m playing what I like, but [the] writing part I find more tricky” (Dean, 2018).

A further three participants (Jasmine, Alice & Jenna) stated that they found reading music difficult, with Jasmine explaining that it was made easier through writing note names underneath the scores: “It’s not hard but like, some people might have difficulties understanding the notes, but when we actually write C and A and that it makes it much easier than the note symbols” (Jasmine, 2018). Alice acknowledged a learning curve associated with reading music, while Jenna blamed her perception of difficulty on bad past teachers and lack

of personal experience: “For me, it’s reading music and stuff like that because I really struggled with the notation in younger years because we had bad teachers, and I just wasn’t grasping onto it” (Jenna, 2018).

Mira and Isiah found Music hard, with Mira explaining that it was more difficult than she first anticipated. Isiah did not choose Music as an elective for Year 9 or 10 because he anticipated how complex the course was, and that his peers had superior developed knowledge that he could not catch up to. Isiah also indicated a struggle in adapting to musical terminology: “[With] the theory-based work, you just gotta get used all the terminology and that type of stuff and then it’s alright. But yeah, I struggled with it a bit” (Isiah, 2018).

Avery and Liam discussed their preference of practical, playing activities in lessons, with Liam believing that “practice” was needed in order to develop skills and be ‘good’ at Music. Two participants (Max & Dean) discussed the initial learning curve they faced when beginning to play an instrument. Max faced difficulty when first learning to play the guitar, and Dean indicated initial frustration over his first few experiences with the guitar:

I did get really stressed out when I was trying to learn guitar. So, I was told by my older brother [mimicking brother’s voice in mocking tone] “Sit here and learn this”...it was Metallica ‘Enter Sandman’ and he was like “Learn this” and I was like “Okay”. And I sat there and I couldn’t get it and I was like “Oh this sucks! This sucks so much. I’m not doing this anymore”. And then like after a while I got it and I could like, play it through and it was like “This is so good. I’m really good at this, I can do this now” and I was like “Okay, now that I’m good like that, let’s try and play ‘Master of Puppets’” cause he used to play it, so I was try-na play that and it just happened again and I was like “I can’t play this, I can’t do this, It’s too fast”.  
(Dean, 2018)

Max found nothing particularly hard or easy in terms of musical activities. Another three participants (Grace, Holly & Annie) discussed the difficulties associated with Music as a spectrum, rather than a definite definition of ‘hard’ or ‘easy’. Annie’s perception of difficulty is directly affected by her mood:



I wouldn't say it's difficult, but then I wouldn't say it was easy. It depends sort of what mood I'm in. So, it's easy if I'm having a great day; I'm loving it. But if I'm having a horrible day, nothing's going to plan; I hate it. Then Music will just suck.  
(Annie, 2018)

Grace defined school Music as “a difference between school smarts and something difficult, but something I enjoy” (Grace, 2018), while Holly discussed the relationship between challenge and enjoyment:

If it was easy, it wouldn't be enjoyable ... you always come across something that's challenging. Like, if it was easy you wouldn't want to do it. Like, I wouldn't ... if I knew how to play every song, how to play every instrument, it would just be boring and you wouldn't enjoy any of it. (Holly, 2018)

Carly stated that the achievement in Music was not comparable with the importance of success in other subjects: “When you go home and go ‘I got an ‘A’ in Music’ and [my parents’ are] like ‘That’s really good’ but they’re more happier when you get an ‘A’ in maths, cause you need maths in life” (Carly, 2018).

#### ***5.4.3 Mediators of Difficulty***

Participants highlighted a range of mediators on their perception of difficulty, mostly dependent on personal factors, behaviours and actions. Seven participants (Max, Liam, Grace, Jenna, Mira, Isiah & Dean) noted the influence of previous experience and background knowledge on the current challenges they face in Music. Max and Isiah specifically mentioned finding aural tasks difficult because of a lack of previous experience, while Dean expressed that Music was a personal challenge for him because of this absence of background knowledge:

Music's probably one of the harder subjects I chose, cause I don't quite understand it as well as other subjects so I have to work a little bit harder to try and understand ... My music kinda came from just like practicing a lot and I got better at it and just like listening to music and playing it a lot. And like I never really studied the theory of it, even in like Year 9 and 10 and stuff like that. I didn't really pay attention that much to the theory, I was always just like the prac kinda person. (Dean, 2018)

Mira has a negative self-concept in Music from a lack of previous experience, which Jenna also implied due to past 'bad teachers' who did not develop adequate foundational skills. Jenna also suggested that a lack of background experiences could lead to current difficulties in the subject "because it's a lot of concepts that I've never heard or I've never been exposed to" (Jenna, 2018), a fact also emphasised by Liam. Grace stated that her previous knowledge developed in AMEB exams growing up made Music relatively easy for her, so influenced her choice to continue with the subject:

I find some aspects difficult but not that difficult cause that's all I did at piano lessons, so we had half an hour to an hour lesson, getting longer as you go up the grades, and then like, for as long as you wanted to stay there, you go there and you do aural and we had to do aural exams and we had to a bit of history as well... We had to do lots of aural and theory exams [for AMEB which made it] a lot easier, yeah ... All we had was these little theory books that we got to work through all year and so everyone had no idea but I just knew them. So, it was really, really easy for me... when I started high school, my piano teachers over there would say "You already know the stuff that you needed to know for Year 11 so you'll be fine". (Grace, 2018)

Six participants (Annie, Liam, Alice, Grace, Jenna & Isiah) linked their perception of difficulty with the personal skills and innate understandings that an individual possesses. Alice suggested that difficulty was influenced by individual learning rates, while Annie and Grace posited that the amount of challenge someone found in a task was dependent on their innate abilities:

[The] most difficult subject for me right now would probably be maths. I'm just not a mathematician. I'm not an Albert Einstein. So, I can do it and all that but it's like ... it's still hard in a way. Like, I get a good score on my maths tests; I pass. But I could do way better. (Annie, 2018)

Jenna believed difficulty was mediated by someone's personal skills in the subject, while Isiah saw it linked with their understandings related to the task. Liam discussed how understanding was needed in order to be 'good' at Music, expressing that those individuals with poor Music skills have "no understanding in it, no practice. You know if they don't like it" (Liam, 2018).

Five participants (Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Grace & Isiah) indicated that the enjoyment of Music was directly related to how difficult someone found the subject and related tasks. Alice, Liam and Isiah all suggested that how difficult a task was depended on how much an individual enjoys what they are doing, and that a lack of enjoyment makes a task harder:

[I find] some things hard. I think I can learn a song easy, kind of, if I'm watching a video. But then, when we're doing things like learning about the artist or a certain style of Music, I kind of find that hard. Like we were doing the jazz last term, I found that hard. Really hard. I think maybe it was cause I just didn't have the interest in certain things. (Alice, 2018)

Jasmine linked this with "liking what you play". Grace suggested that finding Music difficult could be connected with a lack of passion:

You've sort of gotta have practice and you've gotta have a bit of an ear for it as well, cause I know no matter how much Music or piano playing my mum or my sister did, I know they wouldn't be able to get it. They just didn't have the ear for the music [but] everyone in the classroom does; they've just gotta practice and be bothered to be able to do it. Cause like I've done this since I was like, 9, and if you've just started this year, it's gonna take a lot of time and stuff. (Grace, 2018)

Jasmine, Alice and Avery indicated that their perception of difficulty was directly related to personal, intrinsic interest in a subject. All three suggested that difficulty was influenced by

and linked with individual interest in a subject, and that a lack of intrinsic curiosity makes tasks harder. Three participants (Max, James & Dean) stated that their perception of difficulty was dependent on the task. James indicated that difficulty was linked with the complexity of the piece being played and individual requirements of the task. Dean also suggested that he found playing tasks easier depending on the piece being played.

Carly, James and Dean discussed how the application of effort influences the difficulty of a task. Carly simply stated that Music was not difficult when effort was applied, while Dean recounted an experience of playing around with friends on the weekend and challenging and comparing each other's vocal ranges. This practice and effort made singing tasks less daunting as he was aware of his own capabilities:

I've never thought I've been good at singing but this weekend,...I was at Rhys's house and...we were just singing a song and being stupid, like having fun and then at one point he was like "Woah" ... we were just singing along and being silly. And then at one point he goes "Hold on, hold on" and he pulled up the music and goes "Sing that note again" and I sang it again and he kept playing all these different notes and stuff like that, different songs. (Dean, 2018)

James indicated he was applying more effort and focus in his Year 9 classes due to the increased significance of the skills and content being taught, with his parents' expectations of him rising to meet these new standards. James also indicated that developing musical skills was made easier through time and commitment to practice:

Around Year 7 and 8, my marks were just very average. And like, I know I can do better, but I just thought it's Year 9; it's not gonna hurt if I put more effort in. And I did...[in] Year 7 and 8 there was barely any Music lessons. Well, there were but they weren't so serious. And considering it's an elective, I guess everyone including myself take it much seriously ... obviously if you play a piece long enough it becomes natural and smooth and you can just play it regardless of how good you are. If you know it that good, and you practice you can play anything ... So like, if

it's a difficult piece, obviously it'll take a long time ... or more than an easier piece.

(James, 2018)

Jenna and Isiah suggested that teachers influenced the difficulty of certain subjects, tasks and skills. Jenna discussed how her previous experiences with bad teachers influenced the current difficulties she faces with reading sheet music, adapting to vocal terminology and understanding her instrument. Isiah also indicated that he struggled adapting to musical vocabulary and terminology, but was supported by Mrs Maple who made it easier to understand.

Annie explained how people who found Music difficult “don’t have the attitude. They don’t want to do it, they don’t have the passion for it. So, they just don’t feel for it” (Annie, 2018). Carly noted how distractions from peers can increase the difficulty of tasks and concentrating within the classroom, explaining how it is “easier to get distracted cause the music sometimes plays [from the keyboards]” and that “some people I think don’t try their best so it makes it harder. But then when people practice they actually get good at it” (Carly, 2018). Avery believed that difficulty was linked with the utility value placed on school achievement and the skills needed from that task or subject: “It really does shape your future in the first 20 years of it...and then as soon as you’re out of school, whatever credentials you’ve gotten from school will get you into certain jobs” (Avery, 2018).

## **5.6 Enjoyment**

Enjoyment emerged as a significant theme that directly influenced the initial interest, engagement and continued participation of students, and was linked to other identified personal and external factors. The range of sub-themes that developed from participant views demonstrate the affect enjoyment has in Music, on students and on their continued participation. The six sub-themes within the enjoyment data set include: emotions associated with Music involvement; the enjoyment of different aspects of Music; different factors that influence enjoyment; reasons for the enjoyment of Music; the links between enjoyment and choice; and the relationship between enjoyment and achievement.

### *5.6.1 Emotions Associated with Music Involvement*

Participants highlighted a range of different emotions associated with their Music involvement, which could be summed up by the concept of ‘enjoyment’. Five participants (Annie, Max, Grace, Mira & Jenna) noted the passion associated with Music. Jenna exuded passion in the classroom, and Max stated that he has a passion for Music more than other subjects. Annie and Max also suggested that being ‘good’ at Music stems from personal passion:

Whoever is good at Music, they want to do it. This is their life. They love it. They’re passionate for it. They put their life workings into it. They just ... love it. (Annie, 2018)

[‘Good’ Music students are] somebody who’s actually interested in music. Especially if they’ve done it for an elective and like...someone who’s passionate about it and wouldn’t just get excited about prac but also like, the theory ... if they’re able to ... not necessarily play well, but if they’re able to have fun, then I guess that’s good for them. (Max, 2018)

Mira discussed how her passion for singing developed from the increased range of opportunities and experiences presented in school Music programs:

I kinda started liking it, got more into singing and then I met the girls and we started like a band and that and I really, really loved it cause like, I never did anything apart from choir so like I’ve never done singing lessons or anything outside of that. My parents and my sister and my brother and that. They don’t come from a musical background. I’m like the only person. (Mira, 2018)

Grace also highlighted that school Music reignited her passion for playing more modern, “fun” songs, compared to her long history with the AMEB syllabus and exams.

Five participants (Holly, Max, James, Grace & Isiah) indicated that they liked Music. Holly discussed how she was not a social person, but liked Music, and Max indicated that he “like[s] to play guitar, because I can express myself, if that makes sense”. Grace stated that she had always liked Music (“I’ve always loved Music, but some other people, they’re just not born

with it. They're just really uncoordinated. They just don't have that feel for it"), and Isiah emphasised that he enjoyed Music and wanted to be involved ("The principal was like 'Oh yeah! Choose something that you enjoy, cause it would suck if you have heaps of hardcore subjects' so I was like 'yeah, alright. I'll do Music then'").

Alice, Grace, Mira and Avery indicated that they loved Music. Alice and Avery simply stated that they loved Music, while Grace explained that she loved the subject, teachers and playing with her peers:

I just love the subject. I love the teachers. I love playing the piano. It's always something that I have really liked a lot ... I just really like the Music atmosphere and I just enjoy the music and I enjoy the class and playing the piano with different people and new songs. (Grace, 2018)

Mira also described a love for Music, being one of the only things she enjoys at school:

Ever since I was a little kid, it's like the one thing that I've just loved and I literally can't do without it [in a comedic strained emotional tone] cause I'm like ... like whenever I'm doing something there's just like, music, you know what I mean? I'm always singing, I love to sing. Obviously, like want to do something with it later on in life and it's like, if I didn't have a singing voice, I don't know what I'd do. Like literally, no idea ... it's like one of the only things that I enjoy. (Mira, 2018)

Annie, Holly, Avery and Grace discussed the emotional effect of music. Grace found relaxation in coming to the Music classroom, while Holly indicated that music was able to block out other events, situations or dramas occurring in other areas of her life. Annie noted the calming nature of Music and its ability to change her mood, describing it as:

One of those relaxing classes ... I like it. Like it's one of the classes I can come to and just, like, play some music, calm myself down a bit after having some crazy or drama or like, crazy things going on. (Annie, 2018)

Avery described music as part of his identity which allowed him to express emotion, and helps individuals to find inner joy:

I really love Music ... I don't know what else that I would be doing. It's a way for me to, you know, get out emotion, I guess ... learn how to make people happy and make ... find peace and stuff. Because if you're out of peace ... you're not going to make anyone else get into peace ... all my classes are super study based while Music's just the one where I can just relax and do something that you know, helps me clear my head and stuff. It would be easy to have like a class that, you know ... isn't like the hardest thing in the world for me. (Avery, 2018)

Four participants (Jasmine, Avery, James & Grace) found Music fun, with Grace explaining that her history with AMEB exams was making her interest wane but school Music made playing the piano fun again.

Avery and Jenna described a deep sense of enjoyment and satisfaction derived from being involved in Music:

I find it really enjoyable and it helps me, you know ... like clear my head. And, you know, be creative in my own little way. Because things with like Music and like art and stuff, I'm mostly just a self-taught person to all of them. (Avery, 2018)

Carly indicated that they were excited to come to Music classes:

I feel like before we played the piano, I didn't like the piano cause I didn't know anything. But now we love the piano and we're always ... we like get so excited and start singing when we come [to Music]. (Carly, 2018)

### ***5.6.2 Enjoyment of Music Aspects***

This sub-theme grouped opinions from participants about the aspects of Music classes that they enjoy. Six participants (Jasmine, Carly, Alice, Isiah, Dean & Avery) discussed their enjoyment of the practical components of Music lessons, which encompassed those activities that required students to physically play instruments. Jasmine, Isiah and Avery described their enjoyment of 'doing' Music, which Carly explained she enjoyed more than "just writ[ing]":



I think it's more related to performing well, because as much as you could write down things about Music, it's not music until you play it ... Music's more about playing it, than being able to write down things. (Avery, 2018)

The only thing I don't really like about it is when we always copy down off the board when we could be interacting with stuff ... There's never one Music lesson where I don't really like it unless it's just like, we write stuff. (Jasmine, 2018)

Alice and Dean also suggested that they enjoyed playing more than aural activities:

The only thing I like about Music I guess, although I like the class, I feel really comfortable with the class. But, I love prac, cause I can just do what I want, play how I play ... The part I don't like that I chose Music is ... that we have to learn about or had to learn about the jazz. I don't understand it at all. I was more interested in the playing part of Music to be honest. (Alice, 2018)

I'm more interested in the prac side of it. When I want to go to Music, I want to play it and listen to it and learn stuff and like the writing side of it, it's more like "classical" kind of stuff that we write and I don't really understand it all or really need it for what I play. (Dean, 2018)

Three participants (Jasmine, Carly & Isiah) specifically mentioned disliking aural lessons, preferring to play instead: "We do learn stuff from [aural activities] but...sometimes it's a bit too much and we like to play more" (Jasmine, 2018). Isiah also revealed that he does not enjoy theory lessons as he feels they do not make sense due to his lack of previous experience:

I like the practical part, I don't like the theory-based work. I don't get it and I haven't learnt that theory ... [at my old school] it was just work and all that, and it wasn't like doing stuff ... it's pretty engaging [at Chestnut High School]. (Isiah, 2018)

Grace and Jenna discussed their enjoyment of the classroom environment, atmosphere and peers involved. Grace elaborated that she would miss the class and subject if she ever dropped it, and Jenna indicated that she preferred playing with members of the class than by herself:

I'm tossing it up a little bit. Do I keep it? Do I drop it? Cause I want to drop something because I want the free subject. 13 units is too much, but I don't know what I'm going to drop yet. Where I'm tossing up Music is in that sense, not because of the subject or anything. It's just because I hate performing. It's that part of it, and because it's compulsory and no matter what I do, I've always been like it ... it's gonna be hard if I do drop it cause I'm gonna miss this whole class. I'm gonna miss everything that's gonna happen here, cause I really do love the subject. It's more ... I'm thinking about the long term, like if I get into the HSC I'm already going to be stressing enough. I really don't know how well I'm going to be able to perform on the day. (Grace, 2018)

### ***5.6.3 Influence on Enjoyment***

Participants highlighted factors that influenced their enjoyment of Music in the classroom. Three participants (Annie, Liam & Isiah) discussed the influence of previous experience and background knowledge on their current enjoyment of Music. Annie linked enjoyment of a subject with the previous experience had in that area, and Isiah discussed how his lack of background knowledge in musicology influenced his current understanding and adaptability to the content:

Like when I learnt guitar, I didn't do any theory work. I just learnt TABs and that was it ... The theory-based work you just gotta get used all the terminology and that type of stuff and then it's alright. But yeah, I struggled with it a bit. (Isiah, 2018)

Liam stated that he enjoyed subjects and activities that he had previous knowledge in, and enjoys his extracurricular participation in soccer, martial arts and Music due to his long history of involvement.

Jenna noted a previous bad experience at an eisteddfod that resulted in her move away from competitive and judged singing situations:

I was at an eisteddfod once where I was performing and I thought I was doing really well ... and beforehand I had an anxiety attack, so I was freaking out. I did not want

to go up on stage, and this was like my first eisteddfod in a while. So, it was absolutely horrible. I get off stage and the adjudicator comes up to me a little while later and she goes “Are you Jenna?” and I’m like “Yeah” and she looks at me and goes “You did good, but because you don’t look your age, we can’t place you”. And I went “Umm ... what do you mean?” and she’s like “Are you actually 14?”...“because we thought you were placed differently. Otherwise you would have placed” and I was like...[gob-smacked expression] “Ohh ... Okay”. And after that I was just kina like “Oh, so if people are just judging me on how I look, are they really paying attention to what I’m sounding like and how I’m actually performing?” so that kinda knocked me back a little bit and I was just like “whatever, it’ll be a good thing in the future” ...Eisteddfods are like quite rigged. Like unless you are one of the kids who goes to every eisteddfod, you’re not gonna place...like the voice and like XFactor ... it’s very much, ‘Producer’s Choice’ but in eisteddfods’ case it’s the ‘Adjudicator’s Choice’ ... I’ve never done eisteddfods since. (Jenna, 2018)

Grace discussed how her love of the teacher influenced her current enjoyment of Music:

I had Mrs Aspen, which is an older teacher. She left when Mrs Maple came in and then I had Mr Mahogany in Year 8 and they were really passionate about Music. That’s why I loved it. But all the theory was just so basic. Even in Year 9 and 10, I’d finish the Year 9 and 10 booklet within a term and a half, where everyone else was struggling with the crotchets. (Grace, 2018)

#### ***5.6.4 Reasons for Enjoyment***

Participants discussed the range of reasons for their enjoyment of Music in the classroom. Four participants (Jenna, Mira, Isiah & Dean) related their enjoyment of Music to developing their skills and understanding further. Jenna enjoys learning about music, and Mira and Dean want to know more and develop their skills further:

I like to play guitar and want to get better so I can play more songs and be able to play more fluently ... When I was playing guitar in Year 7 and 8, I started getting good at electric. They had like a year 8 band kind of thing, and like they asked me to play bass in it. So, I played bass in it, I got bored of bass and no one was playing electric guitar. So, I was like “You know what, I’ll play electric guitar” ... I was like “Okay, I like this, I’m good at this” and then like it carried on to Year 9 so I kinda just went like “Oh okay, I’ll just choose Music for Year 9 then”. (Dean, 2018)

[Music] makes people happy, so obviously I wanted to do Music in school cause I gain more knowledge and whatnot (Mira, 2018)

Isiah discussed how he gets the most from learning new songs and improving his skills.

Four participants (Alice, Max, Jenna & Mira) indicated that their enjoyment stems from a personal interest in Music. Alice noted that her enjoyment comes from personal interest and were the reasons she chose Music as an elective subject. Mira also discussed how her favourite subjects were those that she enjoyed and was interested in, and had some previous experiences with:

Entertainment’s kind of like all the ... background stuff that obviously happens with Music and all that and then English cause ... I love English and then journalism is something that I wanted to do if I didn’t do Music. And it kinda has a connection, cause like you write songs, you know what I mean? So yeah, and it’s just cause they’re ... like those three subjects, so Music, Entertainment and English are like the best ones out of all of them that I picked and it’s like the least stressful. I understand them...not Entertainment, but I’ve done them before. (Mira, 2018)

Max explained how he plays and practices for at least an hour per day as a personal goal:

[When I get home], first I take off my watch and my hat and then I pick up my guitar and play ... I have like a goal in my day, to play at least an hour and usually I smash that goal. My parents get home at 5 o’clock and basically all I do from like when I

get home at school at 3-ish, I just play guitar...I try and improve my playing skills ... if I know the whole song through, then yeah I will play it, and I like to play with the song, to improve rhythm and stuff like that and at the moment I'm really trying to improve on my right hand, cause it's not fast enough. (Max, 2018)

Annie, Avery and Grace highlighted that Music was different to the other subjects they were currently enrolled in. Annie explained that this difference was due to the emotional affect music has on her personally, while Grace noted that her other subjects were harder and more stressful, so Music acted as a point of difference within her timetable:

I chose Music in Year 9 because the subjects I wanted to do in Year 9, I wanted to have a little bit of fun with them. I wanted to do something that I enjoyed ... I loved Child Studies and Sport. Like, Child Studies, Sport and Music were like my pretty much my 3 favourite subjects in Year 9 and 10. They were just, they were like, you had to work but it wasn't as difficult as like all the sciences and maths subjects and I had a lot of ... I had like a lot of nice people in those classes, and I just like the content ... Music's like a very one, where I can just sort of ... like I can do well, but it's very not a stress-y subject. (Grace, 2018)

Holly and Mira discussed how their involvement in Music as the reason for attending and engaging with school. Holly stated that Music was the only reason she attended school, while Mira expressed that "it's like one of the only things that I enjoy" about school:

[Music]'s the only reason I come to school ... a lot of my teachers say to me "Oh, your attendance", but I hate the whole sitting in the classroom. I like the Music classes how they are, like we're all on the floor, we're all sitting down. And we're not all carrying things in, I don't know it makes me feel uncomfortable ... like I understand that school's compulsory and that's usually what teacher's say. Like "You have to be here" and I understand that I have to be here, but I don't **want** to be here. So, I'm not going to sit here in a classroom with people that I don't even like and listen to what you have to say because I have to be here. I don't **want** to be

here...teachers just seem to be like “Leave your problems at home, it’s school”. They don’t understand ... and they’re always like “You have to be here so you have to do work” and like, I don’t wanna be at school. Like, I never want to come to school and like, I say that they just ... they just make me feel like I don’t want to come to school ever. (Holly, 2018)

### *5.6.5 Enjoyment and Choice*

This sub-theme examined the relationship between enjoyment and the choice to participate in certain subjects. Nine participants (Annie, Alice, Max, Liam, Grace, Mira, Isiah, Dean & Avery) indicated that their enjoyment of a subject directly related with their choice to continue studying it at school. All specifically stated that their enjoyment of music resulted in their choice to continue their formal Music education through classes at school. Grace liked the atmosphere and playing with peers, while Mira’s experiences in early high school ignited her enjoyment of Music, so she continued taking it as a subject for an elective and HSC course of study:

The main reason why I chose [Music] was just cause I had a passion for it and cause I was interested in it. (Dean, 2018)

I just really like the Music atmosphere and I just enjoy the music and I enjoy the class and playing the piano with different people and new songs. (Grace, 2018)

I chose Music because I love it. It’s a passion of mine, and it’s something I want to pursue in the future. I also enjoyed Music from Year 7 to 10. (Mira, 2018)

Annie described how she chose subjects that she liked and has a passion for, which unfortunately was not Music:

I was thinking about Cooking, cause I really like Cooking. Like, Cooking’s a “thing” now I love doing. I was going to take photography cause I love taking pictures; I love it ... I chose elective History cause I love learning about the past and all that and then I chose Commerce cause I thought it would be great to learn a

bit about Business Studies and how to grow in the world with your business. (Annie, 2018)

Three participants (Alice, Max & Mira) discussed how their enjoyment of a subject linked directly with their aspirational intentions to participate in the future. Alice indicated that she loved Child Studies which linked with her future desires to be a teacher and start a family:

Child Studies: That's probably my favourite cause I love kids, and I wanna learn more about them ... [it] was definitely first on the list cause I've been interested in working with kids for ages now ... I chose Child Studies because I wanted to learn about children and their development and things like that. Now we get to go across the road to the primary school and write a little book with the kindergartens about their interests. And I think there's like 5 people in the whole class that are excited about it and I'm one of them. Because I don't know why people chose [it] ... maybe other people thought it was going to be different like I thought some things would be different, you know? Cause it's what I chose Child Studies for. We get to actually interact with real kids now, not just watching videos or um, listening to stories about them ... I think I just wanna do childcare at the moment, but I definitely want a family. But that's not as soon as I leave school, but in my 20s or something I wanna start a family. (Alice, 2018)

Mira wanted to continue with Music as a subject because "pretty much the whole 'wanting to do it as a career' thing. I enjoy it", with Max also stating that he intended to continue with Music as a career as he wanted to make a living doing something he enjoyed:

That's what I want to do with my life...just cause of how fun it is and I can like, make a living doing what I like ... I want to like continue doing it my whole life, so I'd rather improve on it to get really good ... it's like I want to do well, and I wanna also, like, play well. (Max, 2018)

Annie and Carly indicated that they liked Music despite it having no relevance to their future goals or intentions: “I do love Music, but I decided to pick Drama cause it has combined with speaking out loud, dancing and many other things” (Carly, 2018).

#### ***5.6.6 Enjoyment and Achievement***

Participants highlighted links between their enjoyment of Music and the success they experienced in the subject. Two participants (Holly & Jenna) linked the enjoyment of Music with being perceived as ‘good’. Holly discussed how enjoyment and understanding were needed to be ‘good’ at Music, while Jenna stated that enjoyment was important to be ‘good’ but did not necessarily determine someone’s technical skill:

For me, it’s more if you enjoy it. Like, you can be absolutely horrible and having the best time of your life and you could be classified as good in somebody else’s eyes. But to be technically good, that’s another story. (Jenna, 2018)

Alice discussed the link between enjoyment and being perceived as ‘musical’:

[It’s] their interests in Music. So, with me, I’m passionate about listening to music, playing it. Everything like that, whereas someone who ... if they’re listening, I find if someone who was listening to music and wasn’t enjoying it, wouldn’t really be a musical kind of person. (Alice, 2018)

### **5.7 Engagement**

The engagement theme represented the physical manifestation of being involved and participating in Music. Participant interviews, observations and surveys revealed how engagement was demonstrated in the classroom, and the external and personal factors that affect student participation. Three sub-themes emerged within ‘engagement’: actions and indicators of engagement; mediators and influences on engagement; and the range of personal factors that affect engagement.

#### ***5.7.1 Engagement Actions and Indicators***

Participants expressed and were observed participating in a range of actions that indicated their engagement. Six participants (Holly, Avery, James, Grace, Isiah & Dean) showed their engagement by being focused in the classroom and on associated activities. Avery remained



on topic during group work and was generally focused, comparable to Grace who was always prepared, studious and attentive during class. Dean was the most attentive and focused male class member in Year 11, compared to Isiah who was quieter but showed his focus by using initiative to look at classroom displays and posters to support his responses in assessment tasks. Holly was focused and relatively well-behaved in the Music classroom, which was vastly different to her approach in other classes. James noted that he was focusing and working harder in his Year 9 subjects due to the seriousness associated with choosing subjects as an elective:

Around Year 7 and 8, my marks were just very average. And like, I know I can do better, but I just thought it's Year 9; it's not gonna hurt if I put more effort in. And I did ... [in] Year 7 and 8 there was barely any Music lessons. Well, there were but they weren't so serious. And considering it's an elective, I guess everyone including myself take it much seriously. (James, 2018)

Six participants (Annie, Jasmine, James, Jenna, Mira & Dean) discussed the application of effort as demonstrating engagement in Music. Jenna afforded time, effort and significance status to her musical interests due to its relevance to her future aspirations:

I wanna be doing something in Music and having Music as a part of my HSC will be a step forward already...fingers crossed I think I won't get below a Band 5. I'm hoping, just because I'm putting so much time and effort into it ... [what makes someone technically 'good' is] putting the effort into learning what you're doing and making the time to make it a priority for what you're doing. (Jenna, 2018)

Annie applied effort during class and believed that ability was directly linked with the amount of effort extended to the activity. Annie also suggested that students should be assessed on the amount of effort they apply to the classroom, rather than the sounds they are able to produce from an instrument:

Maybe one of the projects is you have to create your own music on any instrument and like you create the sound and then that you're judged on that, like how you practice, if you practice enough or if like the pitch is right ... instead of the more theory side of it. (Annie, 2018)

Jasmine believed that focusing on one instrument allowed an individual to develop specific skills further, and James thought that commitment and dedication were needed in order to become ‘good’ at Music:

I think it would be commitment. If you’re not committed and I guess you’d say ‘lazy’, I don’t think you’d get very good as a musician or whatever instrument you play. I mean, if you put enough commitment and you’re committed obviously, I guess you can play whatever you strive to do ... So, obviously if you play a piece long enough it becomes natural and smooth and you can just play it regardless of how good you are. If you know it that good, and you practice you can play anything ... So, like, if it’s a difficult piece, obviously it’ll take a long time ... or more than an easier piece. (James, 2018)

Mira discussed how effort was needed to spark interest, and that individuals had to ‘try’ in order to be considered ‘good’ at Music:

I’ve had friends that are like ... I have a friend, she isn’t musical, she doesn’t sing, nothing like that, but I think she’d do pretty good if she actually tried. But I think the thing that makes someone good and what makes someone bad is the fact that they don’t maybe try it or they think they’re not as good as they are or like they don’t have an interest ... I feel like, if you wanna like learn to play an instrument you can. If you want to try and sing, you don’t have to be amazing at it as long as you try. (Mira, 2018)

Six participants (Jasmine, Carly, Max, Alice, Liam & Dean) discussed their preference of practical activities which allowed them to engage with music in a hands-on way. Max and Jasmine noted the importance of practical experiences which allowed students to ‘do’ and interact with music to develop their skills further, while Dean and Carly simply stated they preferred lessons where they played music. Liam indicated that he preferred practical activities and was “not sure” whether he would continue with school Music if this was not a component of the course:

For me and Jason, we wanna really spend as much time as we can playing music.

It's important to know the history of Music, but it's also nice to prac or just do the music that you were shown. (Liam, 2018)

Alice also linked her continued involvement with her want to learning how to play and read music:

I used to [like it] more last year than I do this year. I really wanted to do it, cause I chose Music. I really wanted to learn how to play, how to read music. But I feel we haven't done that as much, and I just didn't know what we would be learning. Otherwise I wouldn't have chosen it if I knew ... what we'd be learning last year and when I got to choose my electives, I wouldn't have chosen Music ... just cause I wanted to learn how to read it ... I understand that we have to learn other things like the blues or whatever, but I was interested in learning how to read music, and I get that people know how to already but there's a lot who don't as well. I know if I knew how to read music, I would be so much more interested in Music I would be able to pick up a sheet and be able to read it, whereas now, I have to get someone to help me write down what notes are what notes. (Alice, 2018)

Jasmine, Carly, Max, Liam and Dean described the practice they were involved in during their own time outside of the classroom. Jasmine and Carly recounted playing during lunchtimes together, while Max set himself a personal goal of playing the guitar for at least an hour per day (usually far surpassing this goal). Max and Dean participated in bands outside of school, and Liam used his own music studio at home to practice and create music.

James, Grace, Mira, Isiah and Dean demonstrated the relationship between on-task and distracted behaviours. Isiah, James and Dean could get distracted during class, especially when their friends were present. Grace and Mira were prepared, studious and attentive, demonstrating clear interest and enjoyment of Music by bringing appropriate notes and workbooks, and always being ready to hand in assignments on the due date.

Avery, Grace, Mira and Dean demonstrated the influence of personal motivation on their engagement with Music. Avery and Grace were both self-motivated, driven and determined in classroom activities, while Mira emphasised that she wanted to study and learn more about Music. Dean discussed how his continuation with Music was driven by a want to learn how to play fluently:

I wanted to be able to play guitar like you see in the movies. You see dudes play guitar and that. I'm just like "I'd like to be able to sit there and just play guitar" so I wanted to try and learn it ... I like to play guitar and want to get better so I can play more songs and be able to play more fluently. (Dean, 2018)

Liam and Avery) demonstrated confidence in their Music skills and abilities:

I sorta just felt I was good at it and stuck with it ... I've been doing Music ever since I was a little kid ... With soccer and everything else, you don't really feel like you're the best at it. But with Music, I feel like I'm at least decent ... I have a good understanding of what I'm doing. (Liam, 2018)

I think that [my family history] is kind of a reason why I'm a really good singer. Not to toot my own horn ... So, you know how I have a really different, higher big range? That comes from my mother definitely. So, my mum was a soprano and she trained herself down to go into alto ... so she used to be able to do the entire range between soprano and alto. (Avery, 2018)

Mira wanted to begin lessons and support her parents with the financial burden in order to improve her engagement with Music and develop her skills further:

I really want to start but ... we have like busy schedule ... and just cause like money-wise and stuff ... it can be like [expensive]. I'm trying to like get a job so I can like afford it so my parents ... perhaps they don't have to pay completely so I could help them out. (Mira, 2018)

### *5.7.2 Engagement Mediators and Influences*

Participants discussed a range of mediators and influences on engagement which were categorised into this sub-theme. Three participants (Alice, James & Jenna) noted the effect of previous experiences on their current engagement. Alice noted that the difficulty and engagement in a task or topic was dependent on previous experiences and familiarity with the content. James emphasised that the more time and experiences an individual had in Music allowed them to improve and develop their skills to a higher level:

If I was to say there'd be like 3 categories; best, middle and bottom. I'd say I'd be around the middle, especially for the time I've been playing the keyboard ... I haven't really had too much time to become great. But, I've had enough time to know what I'm doing ... So, if you've been playing an instrument for 10 years and you didn't get anywhere, I'd say that's the point where you're not the greatest ... for how long I've been playing, I'd honestly say [I'm 'good']. If I had played for any longer, I'd say pretty bad. But I've only just started playing keyboard since the end of Year 7 ... a year and a bit and for that time, I reckon I'm fine. (James, 2018)

Jenna explained how turning down a place offered to her in Year 7 at a local performing arts high school, and subsequently developing her passions further made her want to continue her involvement with Music:

I got into Hazelnut High School of Performing Arts [HHSPA] for singing, but in year ... in Year 6 when I was choosing, I was still, back then I was like "Oh yeah, I'm actually not that interested in it. I'd rather, like, focus on school and stuff and just go to one that's closer" and I'm still pissed at myself about that [laughs]. I'm still so angry that I chose to say no to the opportunity but because I said no, I've had so many more opportunities and so ... part of choosing for Year 9 was the fact that I'd said no to HHSPA and I wanted to actually continue on with my music, because I had become a lot more passionate about Music and singing since. (Jenna, 2018)

Jenna and Mira discussed the influence of their family on their current involvement in Music. Jenna stated that her engagement was dependent on the support and encouragement from her family, while Mira revealed that her initial involvement in Music was due to a parental belief that "soccer wasn't for girls". Mira's parents initially encouraged her to participate in choirs and singing opportunities, but did not support her aspirations of a career in the Music industry.

Grace and Mira noted the range of expectations that were placed on them, that influence their engagement in different activities. Grace expressed that she put pressure on herself to succeed and was very competitive, particularly in sporting environments:

I suppose [marks] weren't really that important to me in primary school. And then once I got to high school, I actually started doing well. I've always wanted to just keep going, like I don't like just sitting round and doing nothing. I feel like I'm being really lazy. I like to strive for things ... I'm very competitive, especially when it comes to sport. I'm highly competitive. I was always like that in primary school but, it sorta was a little bit different in primary school. There wasn't like, tests. I always wanted to do really well in them, but ... it was a different environment.  
(Grace, 2018)

Mira described her parents' expectations to 'do well' in school, but indicated that they did not understand or encourage her future Music aspirations:

My parents came here like 18 years ago ... the year before I was born, with my two older siblings and they didn't know anything about Australian culture; they didn't even know how to speak English. So, then obviously they were raised a completely different way to how Australians here would be raised and also how I am so I guess the expectations for me to like, finish school, graduate school obviously, get a good HSC and everything, go to uni and study. I don't know. They always change cause my Dad was like "I want you to be a doctor" but then he thinks like now I should be like a teacher. Like, either high school, primary school or be like a uni teacher or something. And then obviously like, the whole 'get married', 'have kids' but they do want me to get married to someone that's my religion ... My brother's very supportive of me doing Music. My sister's like supportive but at the same time she wants me to do something like her. So, she's studying business, and she kinda wants me to go that path. And my parents, I think they kinda like want the best for me and

they know that Music's hard and especially how you get into the Music industry. So, they want me to have like a backup plan, but I'm sure that if I like...I don't want to go to uni. I want to go to like a Music college or something. But my Mum's kinda like ... [laughing slightly] every single time you like bring it up she's like "No" [imitating mother's condescending look]. I think she's just kinda scared that I'm not gonna have a future out of it. That's the only thing. But if it was like a certain thing, then they would be supportive...they've talked about my singing before and I've mentioned wanting to do lessons and stuff and they were like "We'll see about it".

(Mira)

Holly and Grace discussed how the atmosphere of the classroom influenced their desire to engage and participate. Holly noted feeling comfortable in the Music classroom, and Grace enjoyed the atmosphere of the classroom and the involvement of her peers. A further two participants (Avery & Max) emphasised how personal interest was linked with current engagement and their identities as musicians. Avery continued participating in Music because it was part of his personal identity, with an intrinsic interest that provided a foundation for his engagement. Max also described himself as "always listening to music". Holly and Avery noted the influence of the teacher on their engagement with a subject. Both Holly and Avery liked Mrs Maple, and described how their participation and focus within a subject was impacted by the teacher:

At first [my maths teacher] was okay ... she was really nice and helpful. But now I just ... I don't know like what my like, issue is with her. I just don't like her ... I hate maths so much and the one topic that I understood was Pythagoras and she just like, kinda pushed it away. We did like one period on it and then it was like "Now we're not doing it anymore" ... the *one thing!* ... it's just like the one thing that I liked she wouldn't even spend like a whole week on it". (Holly, 2018)

Annie and Jenna discussed how passion mediates an individual's desire to continue with a subject. Although Annie did not have musical interests, she believed passion and ability were linked as she observed the engagement of herself and her classmates:

Yeah, practice does make perfect, but I feel like there's some people in class, like Beatrix, she's just like born to be a musician. She just knows and I feel like that's what it really takes to be a really good musician. You're just born to be a musician. (Annie, 2018)

Jenna indicated that she wanted to continue with Music because of the increase in her passion, after turning down a place in the local selective performing arts secondary school.

Annie indicated that they engaged with and continued participating in subjects that she found relevant to developing skills needed for the future. Annie also discussed Music as irrelevant to their future goals, which influenced their decision to continue participating but not their current engagement and application of effort in class:

In all subjects, you've gotta try your best and give it a go. And if you don't like it, then don't make it your passion. All subjects are important in their own way, but to me the subject that isn't important to me right now is probably like Metalwork or Woodwork. I just don't want to become a carpenter or work in the steelworks ... I would probably go with something that helps me in the future, not now, that I probably won't have to do when I'm older (Annie, 2018)

Liam stated that his engagement was dependent on the task, and was usually more likely to participate actively in practical lessons.

Holly indicated that their "want" to do something directly mediates her choice to engage in the moment and in future. Holly stated that she chooses whether to engage and listening depending on how she feels and what she wants to do in the situation, emphasising that she wants to learn in the Music classroom but does not want to be at school in general ("If I don't want to do something, I'm not going to do it ... I don't *want* to be here" (Holly, 2018)).

### ***5.7.3 Personal Factors Affecting Engagement***

Participants explored a range of personal factors that affected their engagement with Music in the classroom, and their desire to continue participating. Three participants (Alice, Max & James) revealed a personal goal of learning how to read music which influenced their



engagement and effort applied. Alice was interested and determined to learn how to read music, and James wanted to develop fluency in his reading skills:

My goals [is] reading scores; I wanna be able to read as good as possible and just play practically ... my main goal is to be able to fluently sight read ... Be able to read the score as quick as possible. (James, 2018)

Max, Liam and Isiah discussed their level of Music knowledge which influenced their current engagement in the subject. Max wanted to improve his musical understanding so chose Music as an elective, while Isiah considered himself musical but with limited technical understanding which directly influenced his ability to understand and adapt to tasks and lessons. Liam indicated that he had a good understanding and high level of technical skill related to Music, taking on leadership roles in group tasks and sometimes inducing boredom in repetitive or familiar tasks.

Avery and Isiah indicated engaging with Music due to the personal significance it had in their lives. Isiah described himself as always listening to music, while Avery continues because he is “really into music”. Liam and Grace described themselves as having a good self-concept. Grace would consider herself musical, and Liam believed that Music was something he was good at when compared to other activities, students or subjects. Alice and James emphasised their average self-concept in Music, with Alice not expecting too much of herself:

I don't really mind if I'm at a “sound” level of Music because I don't expect anything more. I just don't think I'm very good, so I already assumed that I'm gonna get the marks I get. As my overall mark, I got a C this year. (Alice, 2018)

James also described himself as average for the amount of time he had been involved, but that if he had been learning for any longer he would think less of his skills.

## **5.8 Future Relevance**

Future relevance emerged as an important theme that determined whether or not students continued to be involved in Music education, and influenced their choices related to subjects and tasks. Where a student could not see future applicability in the skill, task or content being presented, they would choose not to continue. Future relevance was also expressed as the value

students ascribed to Music or a particular skillset, referring to the significance and application of this understanding to future goals, desires or expectations. Future relevance was mostly influenced by personal interest and identity, with students able to distinguish their current enjoyment and engagement in Music from its applicability and importance to their future intentions. Three sub-themes emerged within the larger theme that explained the significance students ascribed to Music, links with choice and personal factors that influenced value. These were summarised into sub-headings: perceptions of significance; the relationship between future value and continuing choice; and personal factors that influence the choice to continue with certain subjects.

### *5.8.1 Perception of Significance*

Participants discussed their perceptions of the significance and relative importance of Music, which directly influenced the future utility value and relevance of the related skills in their lives. Nine participants (Annie, Carly, Holly, Max, James, Grace, Jenna, Mira & Avery) discussed the importance of success and achievement at school and in their subjects in relation to their future goals. Annie and her father made a deal to improve her grades in Year 8, otherwise she would move schools in order to receive more support from a non-government school:

Me and my dad, we made a deal in Year 7. If I don't get good grades by the end of this year, I will be moving schools. So, that is sort of an expectation because if I don't do good in school, then they will move me to either [non-government education option] so I get more help instead of from a public school. (Annie, 2018)

Carly and Holly stated that the importance of Music was directly related to the value of music in someone's lives, with each identifying that it would be more important to those who wanted to be a Music teacher or directly involved in the Music industry:

I think Music's important in life sometimes, cause if you wanna be like, a Music teacher, or you wanna be someone that goes on "The Voice" or something, you need to know how to ... Sometimes people wanna be Music teachers so they're probably the ones that are more focused on it. But I don't even want to be a Music teacher, I love music. (Carly, 2018)

If your choice is to be a Music teacher, or a musician, then obviously you're gonna like, try really hard to get good marks and stuff like that. But I don't know...I think it's important as the other subjects. Like English it's obviously important to get good marks if you wanna like ... continue. Well, it's not really important to get school [grades], it mostly depends what you wanna do when you're older and like, what subjects you want to do. Cause if you want to be a Music teacher, there's no point in getting good marks in English and maths and all that, because you don't need them. But if you want to be a maths teacher, or if you want to do stuff with maths, there's no point in doing good in Cooking or Music or something like that. Like, it all depends on what you want to do when you're older, and what you want to be when you're older. (Holly, 2018)

James also echoed how it was more important for him to take subjects that aligned with his future goals, rather than focus on his hobby of music:

As a hobby, I find it pretty important. It's great [but] it's not a career ... cause the thing I wanna learn is maybe much further down the track where I have sort of a basis to run off. I can definitely try it again [but] definitely a hobby ... I wanna do Physics and Maths Extension although I don't know 'bout anything other than that at the moment because my career that I've chose is, ah, military ... I thought that I'd choose something that would improve my academics, especially if I go into a different role. And I guess I play a lot of sport and that helps with the physical, and being able to like ... I guess be[ing] smart definitely helps with everything. So, I thought I'd definitely follow an academic-type path of subjects. (James, 2018)

Max, Jenna and Mira all described Music as highly important to succeed in, due to its direct relevance to their future goals and aspirations:

Yeah [it's important], 100%, cause after school, I want to go to a Music college hopefully and then get into the Music industry and if not, then ... no, not really. It doesn't [fit] with the other paths that I choose to go through but I think that it's

always going to have an impact on me cause I think that I'm still going to want to do something with music and continue to sing. (Mira, 2018)

I wanna be doing something in Music and having music as a part of my HSC will be a step forward already ... I definitely want to be in the Music industry, whether it be like ... managing for bands or being the performer myself. I wanna be somewhere in there working for a record label ... anything like that. Or if that doesn't exactly work out, I see myself going into sport science which is completely opposite to what you'd think ... like honestly, I'd be happy with both. (Jenna, 2018)

Avery discussed the importance of achieving in school-based subjects as they shaped an individual's future and credentials upon entering adulthood.

Five participants (Holly, Max, Liam, Jenna, Mira & Avery) defined music as an important subject. Holly and Avery saw Music as important based on indirect utility value ("not exactly, but you know, slightly" (Avery, 2018)), with Avery emphasising music's capacity to help others find peace and joy in other areas of their lives:

I do want to write so I feel like if I can pick up music a little bit better I feel like I'd be able to like write ... I don't know. I do want to write when I'm older and maybe music one day, so I feel like yes and no ... [I'll] maybe teach Music at a pre-school or something. (Holly, 2018)

Max, Liam, Mira and Jenna all emphasised that Music was highly significant in developing skills related to their future goals, with Max "definitely" believing that it was important to take as "I think I could [still achieve without it] but I think I'd have more ... trouble doing it" (Max, 2018):

I chose Music and Entertainment next year as I enjoy it and it will help greatly as I want to do Music as a career. (Liam, 2018)

Four participants (Annie, Carly, Alice & Grace) described Music as not important, particularly when compared with other subjects they were interested or enrolled in. Annie, Carly and Alice

all indicated that Music was only important if someone had a desire to pursue it as a job, finding Music personally irrelevant:

I know for Architecture I need maths. I need some sort of English and all that. And then for Interior Design, I need to do like an art or something and learn some English ... I just feel like I probably won't use something that has Music in it. Like if I choose a job, it probably won't involve music. So, I just feel like I shouldn't do something that I'm not going to use when I'm older. (Annie, 2018)

I tell my Nan like "Oh I wish we didn't need to do this" and she said "It's all part of school". Like, it's the curriculum, which I understand. It's probably not a good attitude but I think like, well "What's the point in learning this if I'm never going to use it in life?" but then other people would use it. (Alice, 2018)

Grace saw Music as more of a hobby, with her primary interest in sports such as netball.

### ***5.8.2 Career Aspirations***

This sub-theme explored the relationship between the careers participants aspired to have, and the usefulness of Music and musical skills to the industry or field. All 14 participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Holly, Alice, Avery, Liam, Grace, Jenna, Mira, Isiah & Dean) had future aspirational intentions that they expressed during the research period, detailed in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4***Career Aspirations of Participants*

Year	Participant Name	Career Aspirations	Relationship to Music	Choice to continue
8	Annie	Architect	None	No elective choice
8	Carly	Hairdressing	Hobby	No elective choice
8	Jasmine	Videography	None	No elective choice
9	Alice	Childcare and “starting a family”	Hobby	No HSC choice
9	Avery	Law degree or “something that helps people”	Hobby	Choice for HSC
9	Holly	Childcare or writer	None	Dropped out of school
9	Max	Professional Musician	Direct relation	Choice for HSC
9	James	Military - Army	Hobby but no links with career	Choice for Year 11, but not Year 12
9	Liam	Travelling Musician	Direct relation	Choice for HSC
11	Grace	Physiotherapy, Osteo-therapy or Sports Science degree	Hobby	Not pursuing Music
11	Jenna	Music Industry career, Sport Science or Navy	Direct relation	Attending Music College
11	Mira	Music College degree or Journalism	Direct relation	Attending Music College
11	Dean	Business or Marketing degree	Hobby	Not pursuing Music, beyond bands
11	Isiah	Yet to decide	Hobby	Not pursuing Music

Four participants (Max, Liam, Jenna and Mira) aspired to have a Music-related career, and saw themselves continuing their study of Music beyond school. Another six participants (Carly, Alice, Avery, Grace, Dean and Isiah) indicated their interest in continuing Music as a hobby, playing an instrument or in a band outside of school, although saw no direct relationship between their career aspiration and musical skills. The remaining four participants (Annie, Jasmine, Holly and James) saw no connection between their career aspiration and the subject of Music, often choosing to cease involvement in senior Music courses altogether. James revealed during the member checking process that “I’m choosing Music for Year 11 with the intent to drop in Year 12. I chose it to reach the 12-unit minimum requirement because Maths Extension only got me to 11 units”. Holly also specifically discussed her intentions to drop-out of school in year 10, because “I don’t really enjoy learning and being here, [and] I don’t really enjoy being around a lot of the people here”.

Eight participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Alice, Liam, Grace, Jenna & Dean) highlighted that their continued participation with Music and other subjects was directly related to the utility value the individual perceived. Annie, Grace, Jenna and Jasmine discussed choosing subjects and electives that link with personal goals and interests. Carly appreciated the usefulness of certain subjects and distinguished this from her enjoyment of the class:

I like English. I'm not a big fan of maths but it does help you a lot in life ... I like language but I feel like it's not really taking you anywhere, like last year we did half German, half French ... whereas the other [subjects] you actually need them ... I like health but then I don't cause like some reasons I really like it and other reasons sometimes it's gross to watch. It kinda helps you. (Carly, 2018)

Alice stated that she would continue with Child Studies as it related to her future goals of being a teacher and starting a family. Dean expressed that he was continuing with Music out of its necessity to fulfil ATAR requirements, choosing the subject "because I enjoy playing guitar and I need it to get an ATAR" (Dean, 2018).

Six participants (Avery, Liam, Grace, Jenna, Isiah and Mira) discussed their perceptions of Music as a professional career pathway. Jenna, Mira and Liam expressed a desire to pursue a career in the Music industry, with Liam describing it as his dream job. Grace and Isiah had never pictured themselves as professional musicians, with it being a background possibility but not a central aspiration, while Avery saw the Music industry as too competitive and difficult to make money, to pursue any further as a career:

I have no idea what I want to do after school, but if I do become a teacher, there's always these back up things. Even if it's primary school, I can always teach them Music. And it's just something that I know I can use later in life, especially if I don't know what I want to do. (Grace, 2018)

Music would be good as a career, like writing and that but ... I don't know. I haven't got like, anyone to do work with. So, I dunno apart from that. I'm not sure. (Isiah, 2018)

I would do Music it's just you know, it's such a hard field to get into and become huge and actually get money from it ... because it would be really difficult for me to actually get popular and like really like a one in a million chance. (Avery, 2018)

Carly, Avery, James, Grace and Dean identified Music as more of a hobby, than central career aspiration. Carly suggested that Music would be useful when she was 'sweeping hair' in her future job as a hairdresser, while Avery wanted to use his creative skills to help people find joy and peace. Dean saw his hobby of Music as important through his church involvement and would like to play at a large-scale Youth event but did not want to pursue Music as a profession: "I wanna be able to play in the youth band kind of thing, that's like my plan. Or like play at a big event or even play gigs and stuff like that" (Dean, 2018).

Five participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Alice & James) stated that Music was irrelevant to their future goals. Carly and Annie stated that Music was not important they did not want to do it in the future, with Jasmine elaborating that she chose subjects specifically related to her future goals and skills required. Alice indicated she would continue with Child Studies, but not with Music, as it was more relevant to her future goals. James also highlighted that Music was not relevant to his future goals of being in the military, so chose more 'academic' subjects to develop the necessary skills.

Max, Liam, Jenna and Mira indicated that Music was relevant to their future goals, which directly influenced their choice of Music as a subject. Jenna saw the value in creative skills for her future, with all four participants describing themselves as wanting to pursue a professional Music career.

### ***5.8.3 Personal Factors***

Participants discussed a range of personal factors that influenced their choice to continue with Music, and pursue certain subjects in the future. Four participants (Holly, Liam, Grace & Mira) discussed their own self-concept as a mediator and influence on their choice to continue with Music. Holly had a low self-perception and belief in her own abilities, while Liam felt he was good at Music so wanted to continue. Grace's on-going choice was influenced by her performance anxiety, and Mira's negative self-concept developed from a lack of previous experiences pushed her to work harder as she compared herself to her classmates.



Annie, Liam and Jenna discussed familial influences on their current choice and involvement in Music. Annie made a deal with her father to improve her grades in order to remain at Maple High School, and Liam expressed wanting to continue with both Music and Mathematics in order to follow in his parents' footsteps and make them proud:

A few years before I was born, my Mum and Dad went on a tour around Australia and they were saying how great it was and all of this stuff that ... and they made so many new friends and stuff. So, I kinda want to do that with someone ... [for subject selection] I was thinking, it's either between Extension Math or Woodwork ... I mean it's more to like ... I'm okay at it, but I think it's more to make my Mum really happy cause her Dad is a professor in Mathematics, and she aced math. (Liam, 2018)

Jenna emphasised wanting to pay her parents back for the time and money they invested in her growing up:

I want to get somewhere. I want to make money for myself because my parents have done so much for me, I wanna give them what they've paid for ... give them what they've given me ... my parents have, they've split now, but my parents, we've never owned a house. Even before me and my sister were born. And currently both of my parents are living with their parents, but it's great in the sense that I get to see my grandparents but at the same time it's like I want my parents to have their own houses so my ultimate goal would be making enough money to buy both my parents houses. That's like the only thing in life I want to do. Like if I died the day after that I'd be fine ... I really couldn't care less if I made it and then completely flunked as long as my parents were happy. I honestly wouldn't care; my world revolves around my parents. (Jenna, 2018)

Mira and Dean indicated that their continued participation, involvement and choice was directly related to their enjoyment of Music. Mira also linked this with her previous experiences.

## **5.9 Chapter Summary**

In sum, this chapter presented the emerging themes of the dataset. Themes influencing subject choice and the student experience of Music included teachers, peers, interest, challenge, enjoyment, engagement and perceptions of future relevance. The next section will discuss the cross-case analysis developed from these themes, and the relationships between factors that emerged as a result of comparing results with Eccles' (1983) GMAC.

## 6 Cross-Case Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the cross-case thematic analysis conducted in Phase 3 of the data analysis procedures. To complement and summarise this phase of analysis, a set of Heat Map tables were developed (see Appendix M).

This chapter involves two main sections; 1) an inductive section to uncover factors influencing the choices of participants within this study, and 2) a deductive section that compares and contrasts the findings of this study with Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework. To begin, a discussion of the factors that influence an individual's motivation to continue or discontinue Music education are shown, which groups the emergent themes into personal and external influencing factors. This is followed by a critical analysis of the relationships between factors identified by participants, and those highlighted in Eccles' (1983) original GMAC theory.

### 6.2 Inductive Analysis – Participant Choices related to Music Education

Participants articulated that their choice of Music education was affected by a range of influences that could be grouped broadly into external and personal factors. It was the relationship between these factors that ultimately determined the individual's want to engage with Music education, and their desire to continue participating:

External: Learning Environment – influenced by the teacher and peers involved

Personal: Enjoyment, Interest & Perception of Challenge

The external factors were shown to mediate the individual differences between participants, in the ways they adapted to the classroom and engaged with tasks. The personal factors were discussed by participants as directly influencing their choice of Music as a subject, showing a stronger impact on the achievement behaviours of students. However, the most significant influence on the student choice of Music within this study was shown to be the future relevance of the subject to their goals and career aspirations.

While the teachers and peers involved helped to develop the learning atmosphere and environment of the classroom, this was only shown to influence their desire to participate in

the short-term. Participants indicated that their continued choice was more dependent on their personal interest, enjoyment and perceptions of future relevance, with the ultimate choice to pursue Music based in the relevance to their future career aspirations. The perceptions of difficulty, and overall challenge associated with the personal involvement in Music was shown to affect the current engagement of participants, but not their overall choice to continue. Participants that had chosen Music-industry based careers (Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira), all chose to continue their study of Music in school contexts and beyond, such as through tertiary education courses, formal lessons and ensemble involvement. Those who found Music innately enjoyable, with a deep personal interest (Avery, Dean, Grace, Isiah) often saw indirect relationships between their current participation in Music and future career aspirations. These participants expressed wanting to continue Music as a hobby, and did not place as great a significance on their involvement and achievement in the subject as those with direct future relevance. Participants who decided to discontinue their Music education (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, James) had relatively lower levels of enjoyment and personal interest in Music as a subject, and saw no utility value in continuing to participate. They placed low to no significance on their involvement and achievement in Music, and saw no relevance of the taught skills to their future aspirations.

### ***6.2.1 External Factors***

#### **6.2.1.1 Learning Environment: Teachers.**

Participant data revealed the strong influence teachers have on student engagement in the classroom, through their management of the learning environment and relationships with students. The influence of the learning environment and relationships with teachers remains distinct from personal factors of enjoyment or having an innate personal interest in the subject or finding Music difficult. Participants expressed that although teachers had the ability to influence their experiences and engagement in the classroom, they ultimately did not factor into their decision to continue as strongly as personal interest, innate enjoyment and perception of utility value.

Participants discussed the teacher's management and structure of the learning environment as a large external influence on their engagement. More than half of the participants (Carly, Avery, Holly, James, Liam, Dean, Isiah & Jenna) indicated the need for a teacher with good communication abilities who applies effective classroom management strategies to focus and

engage learning in the classroom. Of these, five participants (Avery, Holly, James, Liam & Jenna) explicitly discussed having Music teachers who possessed strong communication skills which engaged them in learning Music. A further five participants (Carly, Avery, Grace & Mira) expressed the importance of having a teacher who was organised and prepared in order to effectively structure their learning and engage with the subject content, with Grace specifically comparing the teaching of Mrs Maple more favourably to Mr Mahogany.

Over half of the participants (Annie, Avery, Holly, Max, Grace, Isiah, Jenna & Mira) also highlighted the need for a supportive, encouraging relationship between students and their teachers in which they were treated and spoken to as equals, rather than feeling patronised. Mrs Maple was consistently praised for her empathetic response to students, not only in the classroom but outside, partly due to her role as Relieving Head of Student Wellbeing. Holly felt as if Mrs Maple was one of the few teachers who understood her, while Max felt as if the teacher had a personal investment in each of her students. This was noted as a reason for feeling more comfortable within the classroom, and enjoying being a part of the Music program. Students showed great respect for Mrs Maple, actively listening during her lessons and attempting all set tasks. This was in direct contrast to the negative behaviour and attitude of students when the class was led by a casual teacher, despite ultimately still being assigned work by Mrs Maple.

The strong relationship established with students through Mrs Maple's design and management of the classroom environment, and personal connections made with each individual, strengthened the engagement of those involved in her classrooms. Five participants (Holly, Max, Dean, Grace & Isiah) specifically noted the influence of the teacher on their decision to continue with Music, liking the teaching style (Max, Dean & Grace), and supportive relationship (Holly & Isiah) had with students. However, Dean, along with eight other participants (Annie, Avery, Alice, Liam, Max, Grace, Isiah & Mira) stated that their choice to continue with Music was determined more strongly by personal interest and enjoyment of Music than as a result of the teacher involved. I concluded that the teacher helped to engage the students, structuring and supporting their learning which in turn influenced their enjoyment of and interest in being involved in the Music classroom.

#### **6.2.1.2 Learning Environment: Peers.**

Peers involvement in the Music classroom directly influenced the learning atmosphere and could have both positive and negative influences on student engagement. Despite the effect of peers on engagement, participants continued to express that their choice to continue studying a particular subject was based in personal factors of innate interest, enjoyment and perception of utility value, rather than influenced by peers. Four participants (Annie, Carly, Liam & Dean) reinforced the lack of effect their friends had on their elective decisions when questioned further about their reasoning.

All participants discussed the influence of peers on their engagement within the classroom, with data highlighting strong social relationships and interactions taking place. Over half of the participants (Carly, Jasmine, James, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah & Jenna) specifically noted having friends from their close social groups also enrolled in their Music class, which helped to provide a sense of comfort and enjoyment within the class atmosphere. Five participants (Avery, Alice, Liam, Grace & Mira) discussed enjoying Music classes because of the involvement with different peers and social friends present. Although these friends were not the ultimate reason for their decision to continue with the subject, the strong social elements apparent in the Music classroom encourage the desire to engage within Music and its associated tasks. Four participants (Avery, Alice, Holly & Grace) specifically highlighted the comfortable, welcoming atmosphere of the classroom, and how this motivates them to perform and express themselves within Music. It became clear that the non-judgmental, supportive, social atmosphere was established by the peers involved in the classroom. This encouraged further student engagement, although not their personal interest or innate enjoyment of Music which was more likely to determine their continued involvement.

While peers could have positive effects on student engagement through the supportive, social atmosphere they help to create, it was also demonstrated that peers could cause distractions which negatively impacted student learning. While over half of the participants (Jasmine, James, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah & Jenna) had social friends within the Music classroom, these peers caused issues in concentrating, listening and staying on task for five of them (James, Liam, Max, Dean & Isiah). Although these distractions did not affect their ultimate choice to continue with Music, their engagement within tasks and on content was diminished as a result.

Peers help to develop a learning environment with a social, supportive atmosphere in which students want to engage. Although peers can have both positive and negative influences on student engagement, the environment they contribute to encourages students to participate in day-to-day Music activities. Even though the ultimate choice to continue with Music is more greatly determined by personal factors than external variables influencing the learning environment, data clearly highlighted the strong influence peers had on the engagement of individuals in the classroom.

### **6.2.2 Personal Factors**

#### **6.2.2.1 Enjoyment.**

Enjoyment was described by the participants as the deep sense of satisfaction and pleasure that the individual received from their involvement in a subject and its associated tasks. All participants discussed the emotion of enjoyment as an innate part of their personal identity, connected to their personal interests, which determined the level of gratification they felt before, during and after taking part in certain activities. Ten participants (Annie, Avery, Holly, James, Liam, Max, Dean, Isiah, Jenna & Mira) explicitly stated that their enjoyment of a subject directly influenced their choice to continue, with all except Annie noting this as their reason for continuing Music. Annie instead indicated that she chose to continue with other elective subjects that she enjoyed more than Music. Participants also demonstrated a personal and emotional connection with Music and their involvement in it, such as for Avery, Liam and Jenna who believe music is an innate component of their identity.

The Year 8 participants (Annie, Carly & Jasmine) emphasised their enjoyment more for other subjects than for Music, and expressed that their choice of electives for the following year was directly related to those subject areas that they enjoyed most. The Year 9 participants (Avery, Alice, Holly, James, Liam & Max) discussed their choice of elective Music in relation to their enjoyment of the subject, tasks and learning environment from an innate personal perspective, and influenced by previous years of experience. For those who were not continuing their further HSC study of Music (Alice, Holly & James), their choice to discontinue came down to enjoying other subjects more and finding other associated skills more relevant to their future goals. The Year 11 participants highlighted that their choice to continue Music through to the HSC level was based on their innate enjoyment of Music, and the sense of fulfilment they received from playing their instruments.

There is a general intrinsic affinity towards Music as a subject and playing instruments, as all participants expressed their enjoyment of the classroom and the practical tasks that it presents. Half of the participants (Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Max, Dean & Isiah) indicated their preference for practical activities and lessons, rather than aural or listening-centered tasks, stating that this is what made Music classes so enjoyable. Participant responses showed that the enjoyment of Music was influenced by previous experience, with James expressing his dislike of Music before Year 7 because of a lack of exposure in primary school, and Liam expressing that he enjoyed activities more depending on the length of time he had been involved. Over half of the participants (Annie, Avery, Alice, Holly, Dean, Grace, Jenna & Mira) revealed their favourite Music-related memories, which were all centered around the enjoyment experienced while playing or listening to Music with friends and family.

In essence, participants expressed that enjoyment was influenced by the personal interests and identity of each individual, and that these factors had a significant effect on the continued choice of a subject. These personal variables, along with outside influences such as previous experience, and specific task requirements determine the level of enjoyment the participants felt towards Music. It was shown that a subject and its related tasks could be enjoyable, regardless of the perception of utility value; however participants emphasised that individuals must enjoy the subject on some personal level in order to make the choice to continue.

#### **6.2.2.2 Interest.**

All participants highlighted that an inherent interest in Music as a subject and in related tasks, was closely related to a passion in, and personal enjoyment of Music. This was key in determining their continued choice of the subject. All participants expressed some level of intrinsic interest in Music, with the weakest interest shown by those participants in Year 8 (Annie, Carly & Jasmine) who chose not to continue with the elective Year 9 course, and those Year 9 participants (Alice, James) who chose not to continue with the HSC level course. Although Holly showed an innate interest in Music and creative arts, her overwhelming disinterest in the general schooling system caused her to discontinue her further involvement with school, and therefore Music. If an innate interest was present, it was more than likely that the participant would continue their involvement with Music as a subject, as shown in the continued choices of Avery, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah, Jenna and Mira.



Participants indicated that their personal interest in Music was influenced by previous experience and their personal sense of identity. Avery, Liam, Max, Grace and Jenna all had experiences outside of school with formal Music education, either through formal instrument tuition (Avery, Liam, Max, Grace & Jenna) or participation in Music aural theory lessons (Liam & Grace). Avery and Jenna also attended the regional annual Music Camp, allowing them to interact with other young musicians and tutors to further develop their skills and interests. Interestingly, all of these participants with previous experiences (Avery, Liam, Max, Grace & Jenna) describe Music as influencing their personal identity. Mira also highlights Music as part of her personality and described how her brief experiences with choir in primary school encouraged her to learn more about Music during high school. While not the same degree of formal education as the other previously mentioned participants, it was clear that Mira's early exposure to musical activities had a direct influence on her current interest and sense of musical identity.

Data demonstrated that the innate sense of personal interest an individual had towards a subject directly influenced their enjoyment of the subject, and their choice to continue participating. Participants discussed how previous experiences developed current levels of intrinsic interest, and showed links with the individual's perception of a musical identity. If a participant's interest was high, they were more likely to continue participating in Music, and discontinue other subjects in which they lacked a personal interest.

#### **6.2.2.3 Challenge.**

Collected data revealed that the participants' perception of difficulty was influenced by the requirements of the specific task, personal learning factors (such as learning style, pace and task preference) and previous experiences with Music. Half of the participants (Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah, Jenna & Mira) indicated that the current perception of difficulty an individual has in Music was directly impacted by their previous experiences. For Grace and Jenna, previous negative experiences when performing and competing had affected their current involvement in competitive Music environments, and their levels of performance anxiety. Six participants (Annie, Alice, Liam, Grace, Isiah & Jenna) discussed the significance of personal skills and understanding needed when trying to learn Music and succeed in tasks, with Alice emphasising the need to appreciate the various rates of learning particularly when

learning new repertoire. Five participants (Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Grace & Isiah) specifically highlighted that the difficulty of a task was influenced by the enjoyment that an individual brings to the subject, with Grace describing how people who lack a passion for Music find it more difficult than those with innate enjoyment. Avery and Liam expressed preferring practical activities as these were the tasks they enjoyed most, perceived themselves as ‘good’ at and had more previous experience.

Previous experiences were the most highly attributed amongst participants to associated difficulties within particular categories of tasks:

- **Aural work** was perceived as difficult by five of the participants (Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah & Jenna), discussing tasks such as learning about the concepts or history of Music, or listening tasks requiring application of musical knowledge and terminology. Participants noted the lack of foundational knowledge and experiences from primary school that would have made accessing and engaging in aural tasks less difficult.
- **Reading music** was perceived as difficult by three participants (Jasmine, Alice & Jenna), including those tasks where individuals needed to decipher musical language and terminology. Participants attributed this to a lack of early exposure, previous experiences and opportunities to practice in previous years of the curriculum.
- Music was perceived as a ‘**relatively easy**’ subject for Avery, Liam, Max and Grace, influenced by their intrinsic interest, enjoyment and history with Music. Participants with this ‘easy’ perception of Music had long histories of previous experiences, which made the knowledge and skills more accessible in the current context of the tasks. These past experiences could also result in tasks (such as those offered in the early compulsory course) being repetitive, with individuals having to ‘slow down’ for less-capable classmates, which was expressed by Grace and Liam as reasons for disengaging with certain activities.

### ***6.2.3 Future Relevance***

Participants expressed that their continued subject choice was primarily dependent on the innate enjoyment and interest combined with the relevance of the skills and content to their future aspirations. Over half of the participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Dean, Grace & Jenna) stated that their choice to continue participating in a subject was based on its

relevance, necessity and application to a future aspiration or goal. Participants indicated that their perceptions of future relevance were developed through their

- **Choice of career pathway:** All participants expressed some idea about what they wanted to do beyond school, which showed explicit (expressed by the individual) and implicit (themes emerging through analysis) links between their current subject choices in preparing them for these future aspirations. Participants highlighted how their current choice of electives and study programs helped developed skills they perceived necessary for their desired careers, such as Alice who wanted to take Child Studies as a precursor to her Childcare aspiration or Dean who was taking Business Studies to prepare him for his Business and Marketing tertiary degree.
- **Personal identity and interests:** Participants who saw Music as an innate part of their identity, and who had long histories of personal interest and involvement were more likely to see a continuing future relevance for their participation. Liam and Max both suggested that they had always pictured themselves as musicians and pursuing associated careers, so their continued choice seemed obvious and unquestionable.
- **Perception of significance (of the specific subject or task):** Participants discussed the importance they saw themselves and others place on Music involvement, and highlighted links between this perception, and the value placed on continuing participation. Nearly half of the participants (Avery, Holly, Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira) viewed Music as an important subject, noting the variety of skills it teaches and how it prepares students for future musical careers. Three (Annie, Carly & Alice) noted specifically that Music was not important to them as a subject, due to its irrelevance to their future aspirations, with a further four participants (Avery, James, Dean & Grace) felt as if Music was more of a hobby than their primary interest or pursuit.
- **(and) Enjoyment and self-concept (of the specific subject or task):** All participants indicated a relationship between the satisfaction derived from involvement, and the desire to continue participating and pursuing this happiness, which in turn develops a more positive self-concept. Avery, Liam and Mira all expressed feeling as if Music was one of the only 'things' they were good at, leading them to want to continue to prove themselves and flourish in an environment where they feel safe and highly capable. Max indicated wanting to have a job that he inherently enjoys, finding solace and comfort in the Music industry.

The combination of these four variables directly impacted the participant's perception of utility value, which in turn effected their continued choice.

#### **6.2.3.1 Value.**

Participant data demonstrated that value was established from the relationship between different variables influencing the perception of future relevance. Data revealed that participants would continue participating in a subject or task if they saw a value in doing so, such as for developing skills (Max & Mira), gaining marks (Dean) or pursuing personal goals (Jenna). Participants who acknowledged a value of Music (Avery, Holly, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace Isiah, Jenna & Mira), either saw a direct (Music-related future aspiration) or indirect (Music as a hobby, but not a career) value and relevance for their continued involvement. Those participants with direct perceptions (Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira) had high levels of value, seeing relevance between the skills and knowledge they were currently acquiring and its application to their future goals. Participants with indirect value perceptions (Avery, Holly, Dean, Grace & Isiah) had lower to moderate levels of value, based on their view of Music as a hobby or 'side skill' that may support them in life but not directly relate to their chosen career.

Participants who saw no value or relevance to their future goals and intentions in a subject or related activities (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice & James), did not continue participating. Although James indicated he had chosen Music as a Year 11 subject, his reasoning was to fulfill ATAR unit requirements, rather than out of wanting to continue his Music studies, indicating that he would drop Music at the first opportunity he could in order to pursue other subjects related to his military career such as Extension Mathematics and Physics. Other participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine & Alice) chose subject programs that aligned with their own personal interests, were innately enjoyable and relevant to their goals and aspirations.

#### **6.2.4 Overall Continued Choice**

Data collected within this study showed that the participants made choices based on personal factors (such as enjoyment, personal interest, perception of challenge and value), rather than being externally influenced by teachers or peers within the learning environment. Although factors such as the learning environment and atmosphere were shown to influence an individual's desire and ability to engage in tasks, the data demonstrated that ultimate choice to

continue participating in Music was dependent on innate factors such as enjoyment, interest and associated utility value of the task/content.

**Table 6.1**

*Summary of participant choices related to Music education, and their intentions to continue*

Participant	Stage 4 (Compulsory)		Stage 5 (Elective)		Stage 6 (HSC-level)		Tertiary Study
	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	
Annie			x	x	x	x	x
Carly			x	x	x	x	x
Jasmine			x	x	x	x	x
Avery							Hobby
Alice					x	x	x
Holly				x	x	x	Hobby
James						x	x
Liam							
Max							
Dean							Hobby
Grace							Hobby
Isiah			x	x			Hobby
Jenna							
Mira							

Table 6.1 shows the continued choices of participants towards their school-based and future musical intentions. Four participants (Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira) made the decision to pursue Music after school, with Jenna and Mira both accepting scholarships to Music colleges in NSW. Four participants (Avery, Dean, Grace & Isiah) chose to continue their Music studies through until the HSC, but decided not to pursue a career in the Music industry. Instead, they viewed their continued involvement in Music as more of a hobby, incorporating playing their instrument into their ‘downtime’ or as a respite from their anticipated day job. Holly also saw Music as a hobby, but chose to drop out of school at the end of Year 9, thus ceasing any further involvement with the formal schooling system and Music education. The other five participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice & James) chose not to pursue Music beyond their level of current involvement, whether they were enrolled in the compulsory (Annie, Carly & Jasmine) or elective courses (Alice & James). Although James indicated he had chosen Music for Year 11, this choice was out of necessity in fulfilling unit requirements, rather than a desire to participate further in the course. He expressed that he wanted to focus more on subjects that held a higher significance and relevance to his future aspirations in the military.

Ten participants (Annie, Avery, Alice, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah, Jenna & Mira) attributed their choice of electives to the passion and enjoyment associated with being involved in a particular subject. These participants chose subjects they recognised a personal passion in and found enjoyable, with all except Annie feeling this way towards their involvement in Music. A further eight participants (Annie, Jasmine, Carly, Alice, Liam, Dean, Grace & Jenna) linked their choice of electives with the future relevance shown to their goals and aspirations. Within both of these groups, six participants (Annie, Alice, Liam, Dean, Grace & Jenna) stated that their choice of subjects was linked to both the enjoyment and passion felt towards involvement, and the relevance it had to their future goals. It became clear from the data that personal factors such as the innate enjoyment received from participation, along with the inherent interest an individual has towards the subject and its relevance to developing skills needed for future aspirations, stood out as the main influencing factors on continuing choice.

In sum, this section presented the cross-case analysis of the emergent case themes discussed in Chapter 5. This analysis acknowledged two larger groups of external and personal factors, along with the perception of future relevance and value that influenced the overall choice of Music as a subject within this study. The next section will compare these themes with Eccles' GMAC theoretical framework which has guided this study.

### **6.3 Deductive Analysis – GMAC and Participant Choices Related to Music Education**

This section compares the emergent factors discussed in previous sections with Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework. The participant choice to study Music education in this study was mainly associated with the goals and self-definition construct of the GMAC, with other factors such as the perception of socialisers' attitudes and expectations, attributions of past experiences and task-specific beliefs mediating the differences between individual approaches. Although these did not impact the student choice to study Music as a subject as significantly as other factors identified in this study, comparisons have been made between data collected and the theoretical framework to uncover underlying relationships.

### *6.3.1 Perception of Socialisers' Attitudes and Expectations*

Within this study, participants highlighted the influence of three main groups of socialisers; their family, teachers and peers. These socialisers helped participants engage in Music in and outside of the classroom and school environment, offering support and encouragement throughout. While some expectations were highlighted, the most significant influence of socialisers came from the supportive, encouraging role that family, teachers and peers played when facilitating individual engagement in Music.

While participants did not express specific expectations imposed on subjects or involvement by their socialisers, each were described as encouraging the individual to pursue something they enjoyed and were interested in. Perceptions of their expectations related to a general want for individuals to engage, listen and do something they actually **want** to do. Families wanted their children to be happy, while the perceived expectations from teachers revolved around wanting their students to engage actively, and maintain control over their own behaviour. Friends were noted as being encouraging of one another, with many friendship groups comprised of individuals with a wide variety of interests.

#### **6.3.1.1 Family.**

A major influence on participant's engagement with their area of interest came from the support offered by their family, including parents, guardians, grandparents, siblings and wider family members. Participants expressed that their families helped to support costs, provide opportunities, encourage their involvement and inspire their continuation. Six participants (Annie, James, Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira) noted direct influences of their parents on their current attitudes and behaviours towards Music and school; however these expectations again seem to centre around providing support for their child. Annie recounted specific achievement expectations set forward in an agreement with her father, to ensure she is being supported throughout her high school education with appropriate teachers and work ethic. James wanted to maintain his current achievement trajectory, due to the increased enthusiasm that his parents showed towards his more recent successes and application at school. Liam also wanted to continue making his parents proud by continuing with subjects related to their hobbies and interests, enrolling in the Cooking elective for his Chef father, and wanting to pursue Extension Mathematics on behalf of his Mathematics Professor maternal grandfather. Mira's parents were highlighted specifically as unsupportive of her Music career intentions, while Max and Jenna

expressed that they wouldn't have been able to participate in Music without the support of their parents. Although participants perceived these expectations, it was more the attitude of support that stood out as most significant within this dataset.

The relationship and support offered by families was a significant determining factor in participant engagement and initial interest within a subject area. The structure of these family networks was seen as not important, as some came from strained or broken homes (Dean, Jenna), or lived with grandparent guardians (Alice) but still had families who showed deep personal interest and engagement with their Music participation. Adult figures such as parents (Avery, Liam, Max & Grace) and grandparents (Jenna) often shouldered the costs and organizational arrangements of instrument tuition, with some students such as Jenna and Mira wanting to earn their own money to help support the financial burden of their Music involvement. These adult figures were also responsible for the individual's access to outside-of-school Music experiences such as lessons (Avery, Liam, Max, Grace & Jenna), ensembles (Avery, Max, Dean & Jenna) and camps (Avery & Jenna) which allowed participants more opportunities to practice and engage with their interests. Participants (Avery, Liam, Max & Jenna) also noted that their families encouraged them to practice at home, and would attend performances to show their support. It was also shown that families inspired individuals to continue their learning, as well as sparked their initial involvement and actions in learning how to play. Grace's father suggested that she take up piano lessons after becoming disinterested in swimming, while Dean, Max and Holly described early guitar lessons from their siblings and family friends.

Overall, data suggested that the participant's family provided encouragement and support to engage with their musical interests, but their ultimate choice to continue or enrol in a subject was founded in personal factors of interest and enjoyment. Families helped to provide foundational experiences which shaped their child's interests, with opportunities to practice, experiment and consolidate skills and knowledge beyond the classroom. Mira showed that, despite her parents non-support of her musical career aspirations, she is still determined to continue taking school Music classes and take up jobs to pay for her voice tuition to further her skills. This hard work and dedication culminated in her being offered a position to study Music at a college after school, much to the delight of her older brother who continues to provide support as part of her family.



### **6.3.1.2 Teachers.**

Participant responses showed that the relationship with the subject teacher was the most significant external influence in determining classroom engagement and receptiveness towards activities. All participants expressed their enjoyment of Mrs Maple's teaching style, and her approach to students within the classroom. There was a need expressed for supportive, organised, experienced teachers who possessed strong relationships with their students and the ability to communicate clearly and effectively. This contrasted with the negative view and attitude participants held towards casual teachers. Participants (Jasmine, Alice, Max, Liam) noted that casual teachers in Music were inconsistent, not knowledgeable or experienced with teaching the subject which led to students not valuing the learning presented by these educators. Despite the work being set by the classroom teacher, in this case Mrs Maple, participants connected the work with the casual teacher administering the activity and either struggled or refused to engage with these lessons. Some participants, such as Max and Liam showed markedly different behaviour in class for casual teachers, resorting to talking back, ignoring teacher instructions or declining to work any further on tasks set. It was shown that a strong relationship was needed with the teacher for the students to effectively engage in a classroom, and encourage the individual desire to want to participate. Holly and Mira both indicated that Music class was one of the only reasons they attended school, enjoying the atmosphere and connection they found with Mrs Maple. Holly specifically discussed the teaching style of Mrs Maple in contrast with other teachers at Chestnut High School, noting the care, empathy and interest that she takes in students which allows her to feel seen within the classroom. Jenna also discussed the close relationship she has with Mrs Maple, influencing her comfort and ease of engaging with Music. Jasmine, Avery, Holly & Max further emphasised that teachers influence their enjoyment and desire to engage in the classroom, but did not affect personal measures of innate interest.

Teachers influenced a participants' desire to engage, through the development of strong, supportive relationships with students. These relationships enabled teachers to communicate clearly, organise learning and connect with their students to value a participant's engagement with Music, rather than focus on their achievement. Participants felt at ease with their teacher, which encouraged their want to participate and established a positive perception of the subject overall.

### **6.3.1.3 Peers.**

Participants expressed that their peers influenced their engagement within the school and classroom atmosphere, such as on their desire to attend, comfort to engage in lessons and the distractions they face. Although peers did not influence personal measures of interest or enjoyment inherently connected with a subject, participants noted their enjoyment of the social environment and atmosphere created by their peers. Holly was removed from another elective after an ‘incident’ involving one of her classmates, but finds those involved in Music create a more welcoming, less-judgemental atmosphere which contributes to her feeling comfortable in the Music classroom. Avery also expressed his enjoyment of Music, due to being surrounded by peers who shared a similar level of passion and interest as himself. All participants spoke about the social atmosphere of the classroom, involving peers who would encourage, teach and learn from one another to pursue a range of musical goals from more basic (e.g. playing a known melody using one hand on a keyboard) to advanced skills (e.g. interpreting musical scores, in order to play an unknown melodic and base line). Liam was observed teaching and testing his group members before an upcoming performance assessment, while Alice would seek help from her peers about note names, values and lengths before consulting the teacher. It became clear that the social atmosphere established within the Music classroom was highly beneficial for student learning, engagement and the development of autonomy.

Peers were also shown as distractions for some students, providing the opportunity for off-task chat particularly between individuals who are also friends socially outside of the classroom. Half of the participants (Jasmine, Carly, James, Liam, Max, Dean & Isiah) highlighted the distractions peers can cause, which affected their ability to focus, engage in and complete activities set in class. This demonstrated how peers influenced the engagement of participants within the Music class, but did not necessarily determine their continued choice. All participants expressed the relatively minute impact their peers had on their decision to continue with Music as a subject, except for Isiah. Isiah revealed that his choice to ‘drop’ Music as an elective during Year 9 and 10 was due to the perception he had of his peers far exceeding his own skill level. He explained that the class that was set to continue with elective Music had long histories of background experiences and private tuition, developing a classroom atmosphere with a high perceived skill and knowledge basis. Isiah did not believe he would be able to meet this high standard, which was exacerbated by the fact none of his social friends

had chosen Music as an elective, so he chose not to take the subject earlier in high school. When moving to Chestnut High School for Year 11 and 12, he was encouraged to follow his passions, so resumed his participation in Music, and spoke to the encouraging, supportive, social atmosphere created by his peers within the class.

In essence, those involved in the classroom helped to establish an atmosphere and environment which was inclusive, supportive, comfortable and encouraged all individuals to engage. This impacted on a participant's desire to engage, but not their personal choice, interest or enjoyment of Music. While peers had some influence on Isiah's continued choice, the majority of participants demonstrated that choice was determined by innate interest and enjoyment of Music rather than by those who had also chosen to be involved.

### ***6.3.2 Interpretations and Attributions of Past Experience.***

The previous experiences of participants played a significant role in affecting their current attitude, approaches and choices towards Music education. There were four main groups of experiences noted by the participants that influenced their current perception; childhood experiences, primary school experiences, high school experiences, and experiences had outside of school. By comparing the musical backgrounds and history of engagement of participants, patterns emerged showing that those with limited experiences (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Holly & James) were more likely to value other subjects more highly over Music participation. Although these students had mostly positive experiences within the Music program, participants with less exposure to musical opportunities viewed Music as not important, and chose to afford time and effort to those innately interesting or relevant subjects. These students noted interests in other areas such as Child Studies (Alice) or Military career pathways (James), in which they expressed curiosity from a young age. Conversely, the participants with moderate to extensive histories of Music experiences (Avery, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah, Jenna, Mira) had mostly positive experiences that encouraged them to maintain involvement. Isiah and Jenna both had negative experiences which impacted on their choices and desire to engage at different points of their musical lives, while Grace and Liam's extensive backgrounds in instrument and musical theory study led the senior curriculum to being boring and repetitive. This affected their engagement during the early years of high school, however the positive experiences associated with Music such as playing with friends, or the sense of personal

satisfaction that comes from mastering a piece outweighed these negative experiences to keep both participating.

Patterns apparent between factors that influence the perception of past experiences can be more closely seen when analysing the history of previous involvement, as well as the personal interpretations and attributions of past experiences. While ‘past experiences’ were not specifically noted as a factor influencing the ultimate choice of a subject, it became clear through the analysis process that the backgrounds of participants affected their current engagement and attitude within the classroom.

#### **6.3.2.1 History of Previous Involvement.**

Participants revealed a broad range of experiences that developed their interests, and led to their current position within the Music program. These could be organised into four main groups of experiences (see Table 4.7 for more details);

1. *Childhood Experiences* – encompassed musical home-life, and experiences that occurred between the ages of 0-10 outside of the formal school environment
2. *Primary School Experiences* – encompassed lessons and activities remembered from the primary school Music program
3. *High School Experiences* – encompassed the Music courses taken during the secondary school curriculum
4. *Outside School Experiences* – encompassed musical opportunities undertaken outside of school

Half of the participants (Carly, Avery, Liam, Max, Grace, Jenna & Mira) had some sort of exposure to Music during their childhood, while the other half did not (Annie, Jasmine, Alice, Holly, James, Dean & Isiah). Only three participants (James, Liam & Dean) could not recall any Music education from primary school, while others remembered their choir (Carly, Jasmine, Avery, Alice, Grace, Isiah, Jenna & Mira), recorder (Avery, Max & Grace) and percussion (Alice & Holly) experiences. All of the Year 8 participants chose not to continue with Music as a subject any further, so were recorded as only being involved in the compulsory course. Three of the Year 9 participants (Avery, Liam & Max) had chosen to continue with the HSC Music course from their elective years of study, while the other three (Alice, Holly & James) chose alternative pathways. Alice chose subjects that aligned more with her personal interests and future goals, while James had projected to choose Music for Year 11 to meet

credit requirements before dropping it off his schedule for Year 12. Holly had chosen to leave school altogether, removing her from further study within the HSC courses. Over half of the participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Holly, James, Isiah & Mira) stated that they had never participated in Music outside what is provided in the formal school environment and public curriculum. Two participants noted their annual attendance at the regional Music Camp, with Avery also participating in group singing lessons and Jenna taking part in singing lessons, and several musical productions. Both Max and Dean play in bands with friends, with Max taking private guitar lessons outside of school. Grace and Liam also took private piano lessons, and have had experiences learning Music theory, with Grace applying this knowledge through AMEB exams.

Table 6.2 shows a summary of the participants' experiences with Music education. Variations in previous involvement with Music led participants to being categorised as either having limited, moderate or extensive experiences. Those with limited experiences (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Holly & James) were grouped based on having a low number of previous experiences, with a narrow scope and range. For example, Annie had no exposure to Music during her childhood, and only remembers music being played in the classroom to signify set up and pack down times. Additionally, she does not participate in outside Music activities, and does not want to continue with the subject any further beyond the compulsory course. These participants classed as having limited experiences were also noted as not choosing to continue their involvement with Music, despite enjoying their current engagement.

**Table 6.2***Summary of participants' experiences with music education*

Participant	Childhood Experiences	Primary School Experiences	High School Experiences	Outside School Experiences	History of Experiences	Interpretations & Attributions of Experiences
<i>Annie</i>	NONE	Anecdotal music	Compulsory only	NONE	Limited	Positive experiences, but perceived as not significant
<i>Carly</i>	Keyboard in home growing up, but thrown out due to lack of interest	Choir	Compulsory only	NONE	Limited	Positive experiences, but perceived as not significant
<i>Jasmine</i>	NONE	Choir	Compulsory only	NONE	Limited	Positive experiences, but perceived as not significant
<i>Avery</i>	Musical parents, with choir and singing lessons	Choir & Recorder	Elective & projected HSC course	Music Camp, group singing lessons	Extensive	Positive experiences
<i>Alice</i>	NONE	Choir & Percussion	Elective only (no HSC selection)	NONE	Limited	Positive experiences, but perceived as not significant
<i>Holly</i>	NONE	Percussion	Elective, but dropped out of school in 2019	NONE	Limited	Positive experiences, but dislikes school due to history
<i>James</i>	NONE	NONE	Elective & Year 11 choice, but projected to drop for HSC	NONE	Limited	Positive experiences, but perceived as not significant
<i>Liam</i>	Attended a music school from the ages 4-7	NONE	Elective & projected HSC course	Produces own music using home studio, forming band with friends	Extensive	Became bored in Year 7 because of background, but positive school experiences
<i>Max</i>	Began learning guitar age 8	Recorder	Elective & projected HSC course	Band with friends, private guitar lessons	Extensive	Positive experiences
<i>Dean</i>	NONE	NONE	Elective & HSC courses	Church band and band with friends	Moderate	Positive experiences
<i>Grace</i>	Began learning piano and music theory age 9	Choir & Recorder	Elective & HSC courses	Piano and music theory lessons, AMEB exams	Extensive	Became bored in Year 7 because of background, but positive school experiences
<i>Isiah</i>	NONE	Choir	Compulsory & HSC courses	NONE	Moderate	Negative influence of peers on choice, positive experiences otherwise
<i>Jenna</i>	Interest sparked from school choir	Choir	Elective & HSC courses	Music Camp, private & group singing lessons and musical productions	Extensive	Negative eisteddfod experience, positive experiences otherwise
<i>Mira</i>	Interest sparked from school choir	Choir	Elective & HSC courses	NONE	Moderate	Positive experiences

Those with moderate levels of previous experience (Dean, Isiah & Mira) had some current knowledge in Music developed from their previous participation, although this was not as developed as in the ‘extensively’ classed students. These moderate level participants participated in their current stage of Music education, along with some other exposure during school, and had some experiences either from childhood (Mira) or outside the school environment (Dean). Isiah was also included in this group, as he had developed skills in playing the guitar out of a natural ability and curiosity, but had not participated in the elective course, noted musical memories or experiences from childhood, and was not involved in any extra-curricular Music practice. Participants with moderate previous experiences revealed that these were mostly positive, with the exception of Isiah who explained that it was his own self-comparison with his peers that was at the root of this negative experience.

Those participants with extensive previous experiences (Avery, Liam, Max, Grace & Jenna) were noted as having significant exposure to formal Music education during their childhood and early adolescence, either through instrument tuition, lessons in Music theory, extra-curricular ensemble participation or involvement with school-based courses. Within each category of experiences, students classed as having ‘extensive’ musical histories demonstrated a range of exposure and sustained engagement and interest over a number of years. Although, due to this broad range of experiences, these participants were more likely to become bored with the ‘already familiar’ early high school content (Liam & Grace) or have negative experiences that influence their current engagement (Isiah & Jenna). Despite this, participants categorised as having extensive levels of background experiences in Music were those who chose to continue their engagement with the formal school-based curriculum.

#### **6.3.2.2 Interpretations and Attributions of Past Experiences.**

Although related to an individual’s history of previous involvement, the attributions and interpretations applied to these experiences were shown to also have a large influence on the engagement and intentions to continue of these participants.

Most notably, those participants who had limited histories of Music involvement (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Holly & James) relayed mainly positive experiences and memories of Music. All currently enjoyed their participation in their respective Music courses, although expressed wanting to pursue other subjects that held more personal significance for each individual. It

was seen that while Music was enjoyable in the moment, these participants experienced a deeper sense of personal satisfaction from their involvement with other subjects that were perceived as more important, relevant to their life goals or innately interesting.

The eight other participants displayed varying histories of involvement, but all chose to continue their involvement with Music throughout high school. Four of these participants (Avery, Max, Dean & Mira) expressed only positive experiences and memories of Music, encouraging their current desire to participate and overall perception of the subject as enjoyable and desirable. The other four participants (Liam, Grace, Isiah & Jenna) demonstrated how previous experiences can influence current engagement, and affect the personal desire to participate. Liam and Grace both experienced piano and Music theory lessons from a young age, meaning that the activities presented in the Stage 4 compulsory Music curriculum required less skill and knowledge than they possessed. Both participants expressed feeling bored and disengaged from these years, until school programs offered them the opportunity to play more popular styles of music and in groups with friends. It was this introduction of new repertoire and ensemble structures that encouraged Liam and Grace to keep participating, and reignited their passion for playing which had been waning due to the repetitive practice required from their private tuition. Isiah's perception that his peers' skills and knowledge outweighed his, negatively affected his choice to continue participating in the elective Stage 5 course, although his current enjoyment of the classroom encouraged him to want to participate for the entirety of the HSC program. Jenna revealed that a previous negative experience with biased judges and confusing feedback led to her never wanting to participate in competitive singing environments again. While this influenced her choice to perform and compete outside of school, her positive experiences from her involvement in multiple musical stage productions, voice lessons and the school program determined her continuing choice.

### ***6.3.3 Goals and Self-Definition***

The choices made by participants were influenced by the goals they had set for themselves, alongside their own self-definition. Within these main concepts, three factors emerged from the data that influenced the ways participants engaged with classroom activities, as well as their intentions to continue with the subject;

1. The achievement attributions and responsibility perceptions of participants
2. The career aspirations and future goals expressed by each individual



3. (and) The individual perception of minimum standards for achievement and effort in Music

#### **6.3.3.1 Locus of Control.**

Participants expressed that their skills and knowledge in Music needed to be developed through time, effort and practice afforded by the individual, rather than directly determined by the actions or quality of the teacher, or the length of previous involvement. While the teacher and previous experiences were influences, data showed that participants placed a greater emphasis on the personal responsibility associated with achievement, representing an internal locus of control. James and Dean were particularly emphatic about the influence effort had on their own skill development, perception of difficulty and ability to engage with Music, determining that individuals needed both effort and focus to learn effectively in the Music classroom. Carly also agreed that how much effort an individual applies directly influences their perception of difficulty, while other participants concurred that engagement was dependent on the personal effort (Annie, Jasmine, Jenna & Mira) and focus (Avery, Holly, Grace & Isiah) afforded to tasks. In this way, participants demonstrated the personal responsibility associated with achievement in the Music classroom and alluded to internal locus of control systems that mediated the way they view learning and improvement of musical skills.

Additionally, participants had mostly positive previous experiences, developing a sense of continual improvement and encouragement within formal and informal Music environments. This was most apparent in the experiences and attributions of Holly, who revealed a tumultuous learning history within the formal schooling system. In Year 5, teachers established that Holly had not been absorbing the literacy curriculum from the previous years, leaving her unable to read or write. She was then offered intensive literacy sessions to ‘catch-up’, re-teaching all skills from Kindergarten sequentially to keep her brain from ‘skipping over’ content. These learning difficulties were also coupled with social and behavioural issues, causing Holly to be bullied and attend three different primary schools. During her high school transition, she made a further two changes of schools, and expressed a general distrust of the schooling system and teachers who she felt had let her down by not noticing her issues sooner. Despite this negative perception of school, Holly emphasised her enjoyment and desire to be involved in the Music classroom, noting the comfortable, non-judgemental atmosphere and the supportive relationship she found with Mrs Maple. It was within the Music classroom that she felt most at

ease, with none of her social or learning difficulties seeming to affect her daily engagement. While discussing other subjects, Holly would complain about the teachers, tasks offered or peers involved, but saw music as more of a personal expression and platform for her to develop individual talents and skills. It became clear that her achievement attributions in Music were different to those perceived for other subjects, with Holly even recalling her high achievement in Music tasks at her previous school due to her personal interest and enjoyment of the content.

Just as personal factors were identified as more of an influence on choice than external influences, the achievement attributions of participants identified individual variables such as effort, focus and interpretations of previous experiences which impacted achievement. The participants' internal locus of control demonstrated the sense of personal responsibility they saw associated with developing musical skill and knowledge, determined by personal effort and focus applied during tasks.

#### **6.3.3.2 Career and Future Goals.**

Participants expressed that a major factor affecting their final choice was the utility value ascribed to a subject, and its associated skills and activities. This value was determined by the individual short-term, long-term and career goals, and the relevance that Music had to these goals.

Participants expressed a variety of learning and aspirational goals that encouraged their choices or desire to engage with Music in the classroom. Three participants (Alice, James & Max) expressed the desire to learn to read sheet music, with Alice and James noting this as one of the reasons for choosing the subject as an elective. Participants also revealed their future career and aspirational goals, which had varying levels of relevance to their current participation in Music education, summarised in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3***Participants' career aspirations and relevance of school Music*

Participants	Chosen Career Pathway	Relevance of School Music		Choice to Continue after school
		Personal	Aspirational	
Annie	Architect	None	None	No
Carly	Hairdresser	None	None	No
Jasmine	Videography	None	None	No
Avery	Law degree or “something that helps people”	Low	Low	No
Alice	Childcare and “starting a family”	None	None	No
Holly	Childcare or writing	High	Low	No
James	Military – Army	None	None	No
Liam	Travelling Musician	High	High	Yes
Max	Professional Musician	High	High	Yes
Dean	Business or Marketing degree	Low	None	No
Grace	Physiotherapy, Osteo-therapy or Sports Science degree	Low	None	No
Isiah	Yet to decide	High	None	No
Jenna	Music Industry career, Sports Science or Navy	High	High	Yes
Mira	Music College degree or Journalism	High	High	Yes

Only four participants (Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira) expressed wanting to pursue a career in the Music industry, with music having high measures of personal and aspirational relevance to their goals. The other ten participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Avery, Alice, Holly, James, Dean, Grace & Isiah) had chosen alternative careers in fields such as Sports Science, the Military and Childcare, with varying degrees of personal and aspirational relevance expressed. Despite their future goals not aligning directly with Music, participants were still able to note a personal relevance of learning how to play an instrument, read sheet music or be involved in the classroom to low (Avery, Dean & Grace) and high (Holly & Isiah) levels. This relevance was judged from participant data regarding their perception and enjoyment of Music, with Avery, Grace and Dean's lower relevance stemming from their discussion of Music as more of a hobby than their primary interest. Carly and James also agreed that they found Music

interesting as a hobby, but that they found other subjects more personally relevant, leading to their lack of personal relevance alongside other participants such as Annie, Jasmine and Alice.

The aspirational relevance of Music to participant goals was also classified, with only those who were continuing to pursue Music-based careers noted as having high levels of applicability. Holly and Avery were noted as having low aspirational relevancy, as each expressed how Music would help them connect with other people and support their aspirations by providing a way to express themselves, help others or escape from work-related stress. All other participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, James, Dean, Grace and Isiah) noted no direct relevance of the skills and knowledge they were acquiring in Music, to their future career goals.

Interestingly, over half of the participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Dean, Grace & Jenna) believed that their continued participation in a subject was directly related to the utility value ascribed to it, with Liam and Jenna specifically highlighting the relevance of developing skills while young to support later prospective careers in the Music industry. While the majority of participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Avery, Alice, Holly, James, Dean, Grace & Isiah) judged the skills learnt in school Music as largely irrelevant to their future goals, four (Max, Liam, Jenna & Mira) expressed direct connections with their future goals. It can be said then that the individual perception of significance and usefulness of a subject is linked closely with the relevance of these skills to future goals and aspirational intentions of participants. This impacts on the engagement of participants, as well as their perceptions of minimum standards of achievement, depending on its relevance to short-term, long-term and career-related goals.

#### **6.2.3.3 Perception of Minimum Standards.**

The individual perception of minimum standards of achievement was directly related to the utility value ascribed, and therefore the significance attached to being involved in the Music classroom. It was seen that when participants saw a relationship between what they were learning and some future goal, they began to develop their perception of the importance and usefulness of Music skills within their lives. This in turn built positive experiences and associations between learning in the Music classroom and personal standards of achievement, with participants wanting to develop personal competencies, fluency and understanding to extend their current skill-base. The focus was not so much on marks or grades, but the feedback and improvement of students from one task to the next.

Over half of the participants (Annie, Carly, Holly) noted the importance of success and achievement within a subject to motivate them to continue, and the direct relationship with future utility value. If a participant judged Music as personally and aspirationally relevant (Liam, Max, Jenna & Mira), they were more likely to actively participate in the classroom, push themselves to achieve highly and develop personal skills they deemed necessary to their future involvement. These participants had relatively higher perceptions of minimum standards, and perceived Music as important to not only effectively engage in, but to continue involvement with to extend their current skillsets. Alternatively, participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Avery, Alice, Holly, James, Dean, Grace & Isiah) who perceived Music as having low-to-no personal or aspirational relevance were not as actively engaged in activities, did not show the same levels of personal motivation and enthusiasm, or demonstrate the desire to continue participating as their peers. These participants would still engage in set tasks, but their personal judgements of enjoyment, interest and relevance led to lower minimum achievement standards, with Carly revealing the lesser importance of succeeding in Music as compared with other subjects such as Maths or Science. Participants with lower perceptions of minimum standards in Music were also more likely to discontinue their involvement with Music in favour of taking subjects which were perceived as significant, more relevant to their future goals or held a higher utility value.

#### ***6.3.4 Student Task-Specific Beliefs***

The task-specific beliefs of participants played an important role in determining their engagement, and linked with personal views of identity and difficulty to establish an individual perception of Music. Most participants discussed having an average self-concept of their own Music abilities, and perceived the difficulty of the subject and related skills as dependent on the task being undertaken. Participants found practical tasks generally more accessible and enjoyable, and revealed that major mediators of difficulty came from the desirable nature of activities, the previous experiences associated and the personal skills and understanding an individual possessed.

Overall, the task-specific beliefs held by participants affected their expectancies for success, the value of tasks and the desire of the individual to continue involvement. Each were also impacted by other factors such as the previous experiences of a participant, the innate enjoyment and interest found in the subject and the effort and application applied to tasks.

#### 6.3.4.1 Self-Concept of Music Ability.

Table 6.4 presents the self-concepts of the participants, as well as highlights the common pattern shown in the influence of previous experiences and exposure has on current self-concept.

**Table 6.4**

*Participant measures of, and influences on self-concept*

Participant	Self-concept	Details of Self-Concept	Influences on Self-Concept
Annie	Average	Feels “in the middle”	Previous experiences and exposure
Carly	Average	Feels like she is “decent...for our second year”	
Jasmine	Average	Feels “in the middle”	
Avery	Good	Feels good at his instrument, with a history of high achievement	
Alice	Average	Feels like she is at a ‘sound’ level of Music	
Holly	Good	Feels good in Music, but not in other subjects	
James	Average	Feels “fine” for the length of time involved	
Liam	Good	Feels good at Music, particularly in comparison with other skills and activities	
Max	Average	Feels like an average student	
Dean	Average	Feels “not really good...not really bad, I’m kinda in the middle”	
Grace	Good	Feels like she is musically skilled	
Isiah	Average	Has struggled in the past, but feels comfortable with current content	
Jenna	Average	Feels like she is not good or bad, but just okay	
Mira	Average	Feels okay, but not as good as others	

There was a general average perception of self-concept of musical abilities amongst participants (Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice, James, Max, Dean, Isiah, Jenna & Mira), classing themselves as neither good or bad. This developed out of internal comparison with the skills and achievements of peers, previous exposure to Music education and from the subjective nature of performance tasks. However, four participants (Avery, Holly, Liam & Grace) specifically expressed feeling ‘good’ at Music, linked directly with their previous experiences.

While Liam and Grace had specifically taken instrument and Music theory lessons, Avery expressed that his more developed knowledge came from early exposure and practice. Holly noted that her positive self-concept evolved from her history of high achievement in Music tasks at her previous school, giving her confidence to continue and the belief that she is capable of succeeding. All participants except for Holly and Grace also described feeling more confident in playing and practical-based tasks, than in those requiring aural skills. Grace linked this perception with her experience of performance anxiety, while the previous successes and limited ability to read music led Holly to feeling less confident in her playing skills.

Avery and Liam connected their personal identities to Music, developing a positive self-concept due to innate feelings of fulfilment, belonging and satisfaction derived from their involvement. Liam emphasised that Music was one of the only ‘things’ he felt good at, and that his skills and knowledge had always been a part of how he saw himself. Similarly, Avery saw music as a way to express himself, and as part of his identity that he would be lost without. It was clear that their self-concept and approach to tasks in the classroom were directly related to their self-identification as a musician.

All participants expressed their enjoyment of Music, and the satisfaction they derive from being involved in the classroom atmosphere. This innate enjoyment stood separately from personal perceptions of self-concept, which were more affected by previous experiences and exposure, comparison with classmates, and subjective judgements of performance skills. All participants who saw themselves as ‘good’ at Music (Avery, Liam & Grace) chose to continue their school-based studies, apart from Holly who decided to leave school at the end of 2018. However, only Liam expressed wanting to pursue Music as a career, showing little connection between the individual self-concept of Music ability and the choice to continue with a subject long-term. It was shown though that the self-concept of participants influenced their attitude, approach and engagement in classroom activities, with those who saw themselves as ‘good’ noting lesser difficulties engaging in tasks.

#### **6.3.4.2 Perception of Task and Subject Difficulty.**

Participants articulated their perceptions and mediators of difficulty within the Music classroom, and towards related tasks, and expressed a general preference for practical activities that allowed them some sort of ‘playing’ experience (see Table 6.5). These practical tasks were inherently more enjoyable, and easier to reach a sense of personal achievement while undertaking. Most participants did not have a clear, all-encompassing judgement of Music as either hard or easy, preferring to view difficulty as a spectrum that was dependent on specific task requirements. Participants who found Music easier generally had more varied previous experiences, while those who found it ‘hard’ linked this with personal skills and knowledge, and previous experiences.



**Table 6.5***Participant Perceptions of Difficulty*

Participants	Overall Perception of the Difficulty of Music (as a subject)	Specific Task Difficulties	Task Preference	Mediators of Difficulty
Annie	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	-	-	Attitude, Personal skills and understanding, Mood
Carly	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Unknown repertoire	Practical activities	Effort, Peer distractions
Jasmine	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Reading music	Practical activities	Innate interest, Liking the repertoire, Inherent enjoyment
Avery	Easy	-	-	Innate interest
Alice	Hard	Reading music, Aural tasks	Practical activities	Personal skills and understanding, Innate interest, Inherent enjoyment
Holly	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Playing instruments	Innately enjoyable tasks	Previous experiences and exposure, Personal skills and understanding
James	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Complex repertoire	-	Effort
Liam	Easy	Tasks that are new/unfamiliar or not enjoyable	Practical activities	Personal skills and understanding, Inherent enjoyment, Previous experiences and exposure
Max	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Aural tasks	-	Previous experiences and exposure
Dean	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Aural tasks, Playing certain repertoire,	Practical activities	Effort, Previous experiences and exposure
Grace	Easy	Aural tasks, Playing and performing in front of peers	-	Personal skills and understanding, Inherent enjoyment, Previous experiences and exposure
Isiah	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Aural tasks	Practical activities	Personal skills and understanding, Inherent enjoyment, Previous experiences and exposure
Jenna	Dependent on the task (Neither hard or easy)	Reading music, Aural tasks	-	Personal skills and understanding, Previous experiences and exposure
Mira	Hard	Aural tasks	-	Previous experiences and exposure

Only five participants were able to make a definitive judgement regarding the difficulty of Music, classifying it as either hard (Alice & Mira) or easy (Avery, Liam & Grace). Mira found Music difficult due to a lack of previous experiences and exposure during primary school and through extra-curricular activities. She internally compared herself with her classmates, who she perceived as having more developed skills, and believes that others find the subject more accessible and easy to understand than she currently does, encouraging her to work harder to improve her skills. Alice also found Music difficult, mainly due to previous experiences and exposure, struggling to understanding concepts or content explored in class and receiving average marks. Those participants that found Music easy (Avery, Liam & Grace) also expressed that this perception came from previous experiences with Music outside of school and exposure during childhood, leading the current content to be relatively familiar and accessible.

Participants also identified a range of tasks that they find particularly difficult, with half of the group (Alice, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah, Jenna & Mira) expressing a dislike of aural tasks such as listening, musicology or learning about the concepts of Music. Interestingly, all of the Year 11 participants noted the difficulty of aural tasks, possibly due to the heavier focus of these types of activities in the Stage 6 Music 1 program. Participants also noted the difficulties they experienced with reading musical scores (Jasmine, Alice & Jenna) and playing complex or unfamiliar repertoire (Carly, James, Dean). Six participants specifically stated their preference for practical activities (Carly, Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Dean & Isiah), involving playing or time to experiment with sounds on different instruments, while Holly preferred tasks that she found innately enjoyable and engaging.

The mediators on perceptions of difficulty were varied, although participant responses showed some patterns of influence. Over half of the participants (Holly, Liam, Max, Dean, Grace, Isiah, Jenna & Marja) noted the influence of previous experiences and early exposure on their current difficulties with Music, explaining that more opportunities to develop foundational skills at a younger age would benefit the ease of engagement when older. The personal learning skills and understanding an individual brings to the subject, along with the effort (Carly, James & Dean), inherent enjoyment (Jasmine, Alice, Liam, Grace & Isiah) and innate interest (Avery & Alice) they possess, was also noted as a mediator of difficulty experienced by a participant. It was clear that personal factors such as previous experience and involvement, motivation and

determination, interest, and enjoyment were the major determinants of an individual's perception of difficulty, rather than being impacted by external factors such as the teacher, or the content of the course itself.

While Music was not perceived as overly difficult, participants expressed that their engagement was highly dependent on the type of task they were undertaking. Some participants found certain tasks such as listening activities, or applying their knowledge of the concepts of Music more difficult than other tasks such as practical, playing-based lessons. The individual perception of difficulty, and receptiveness to new tasks was mainly influenced by a participant's previous experience and exposure to Music during childhood and primary school, along with their learning skills and innate interest and enjoyment they bring to the Music subject.

In sum, this section compared the data collected with the GMAC framework guiding the study in the form of Summative Framework Paragraphs. Each group of factors from Eccles' theory was discussed, along with relevant participant data summarised in previous sections. It began with a discussion of participant perceptions of socialisers' attitudes and expectations towards Music involvement, followed by their interpretations and attributions of past experiences. The goals and self-definition of participants was then discussed, before concluding with the task-specific beliefs of participants including their self-concept and perceptions of difficulty.

## **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the cross-case analysis from this investigation into the student choice of Music education in Australian secondary schools. This chapter was divided in to two sections to present the inductive cross-case analysis of participant choices, followed by the deductive analysis to compare findings with the GMAC theoretical framework.

The next chapter will discuss the results of the study which have been presented in this chapter. It will attempt to answer the research questions that guide this investigation into the Music-related choices of Australian secondary school students. Connections will be made between the data collected and the theoretical framework guiding the study, with scope and limitations also discussed. Implications for the research as well as possible avenues for future investigations are then presented before some final notes to summarise the thesis.

## 7 Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion of the results of the study regarding the ways students make choices regarding Music in Australian secondary schools. First, the themes emerging from the results presented in the previous chapter are discussed in relation to the research questions guiding this study. This study was guided by an overarching research question, with three research sub-questions to further explore the specific context of choosing to study Music in Australian secondary schools.

#### **Overarching Research Question:**

*Why do students choose to study Music in secondary school?*

#### **Research Sub-Questions:**

*Within the context of NSW Australian secondary schooling:*

- 1. What reasons do students give for choosing to study Music as a subject?*
- 2. What factors influence students' decisions about commencing and continuing to study Music?*
- 3. How do these factors interact to shape students' choices to study Music?*

This chapter discusses the results of the study in relation to the research questions and presents implications for future research and practice. It begins by summarising the key findings that help answer each research question, before providing details that analyse the data to draw conclusions about the choices made by students in relation to Music education. The implications for the research and findings are then discussed, followed by a consideration of the limitations of the study and areas of future research. The chapter then concludes with some final notes of reflection to close the thesis.

The following section will focus on discussing the results of the study in relation to each research question, using themes and conclusions developed in the previous chapter.

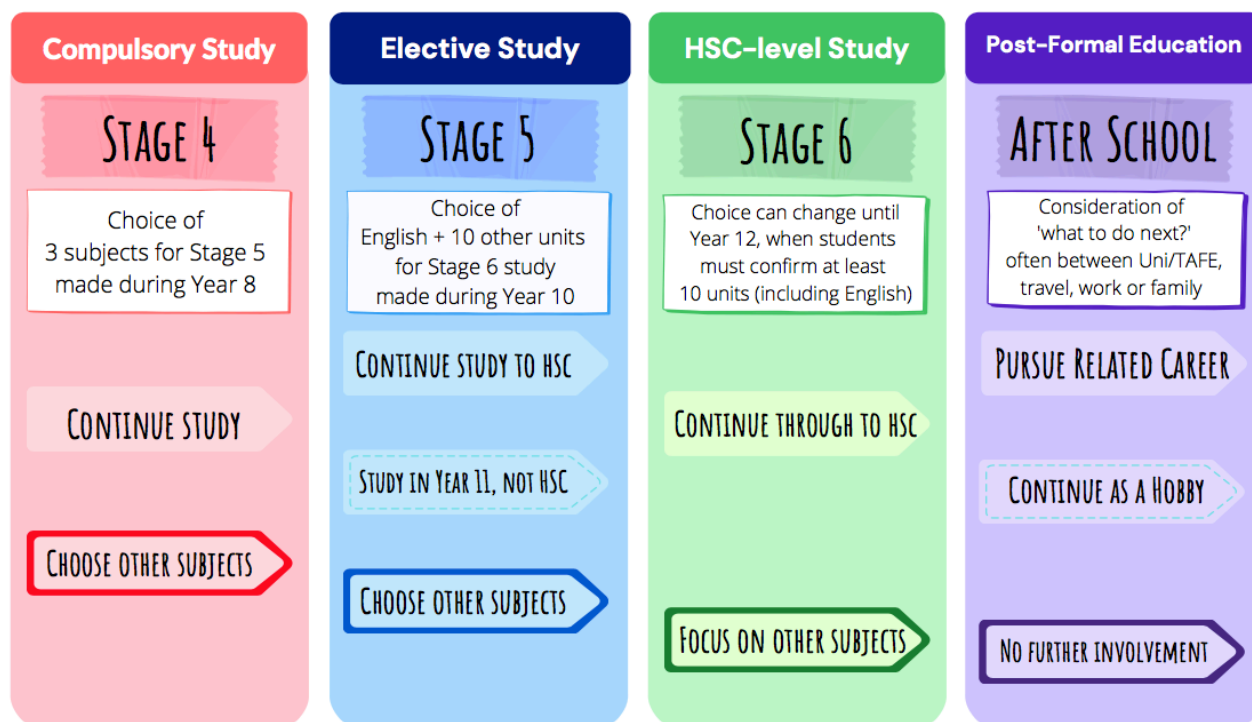
### *7.1.1 Why do Students Choose to Study Music in Secondary School?*

Music is included as one of the subject choices offered to students within their experience of secondary schooling in Australia. This move from a compulsory subject in primary and early secondary school to an elective subject in the later years, requires specific student choice to be involved. Participants in this study indicated that their choice of Music was based mainly in the intrinsic value and the utility value they held for the skills and knowledge associated with the subject, influenced by key factors of affect, interest, and goals and self-definition. In short, the affective experiences and interest of an individual helped to develop an intrinsic value for Music which sparked the initial choice to engage, particularly in the Year 9 subset. The goals and self-definition of an individual were shown in this study to impact the development of a utility value or understanding of the applicability of Music, and the overall persistence within the subject. This was due to identifying a purpose for involvement, and using this as motivation to remain determined even in the face of challenges or self-doubt. This section first discusses the points-of-choice available for participants in this current study of Music education, followed by the justifications provided for these decisions.

Students are offered the opportunity to either continue or discontinue their formal study of Music at school, at specific points within the Australian NSW secondary curriculum. Enrolments (and therefore class numbers) in elective Music classes are smaller than those found in the compulsory years, as students are first given the opportunity to choose from a range of subjects (Board of Studies, 2003; Lowe, 2008; McEwan, 2013). However, this study found that Year 9 elective classes have larger enrolment numbers than in the Year 11 and 12 levels of study. This was because many students tried out a range of subjects earlier in their secondary careers before having to make commitments in regard to their preliminary and HSC courses of study, a finding also supported in other literature (Fujimoto & Matsuo, 2005; Galliot & Graham, 2015; Lonie & Dickens, 2016; Tang et al., 2008). The points of choice, and various decisions available to participants in this study during their Music education at Chestnut High School have been summarised in Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1.**

*Model of Choice Points in the NSW Music Education Curriculum*



**Compulsory study:** At the end of Year 8, students must choose their Year 9 and 10 electives, comprised of three subjects from a given list of options. Within this study, there were five timetabled classes of Year 8 Music, reducing down to one elective class per subsequent grade. These upper secondary classes had less than 20 students enrolled in each, with more dropping out to leave small classes of around 10 students completing Music at the HSC level. This supports findings from previous studies, which suggest that many students will have their last formal Music education experience by the end of Year 8, preferring to continue with other subjects (Giebelhausen, 2015; Lonie & Dickens, 2016). Participants in this study who chose Music as one of their three electives usually remained studying the subject until the end of Year 10. At that time students must make a further choice whether or not to continue with the subject.

**Elective study:** At the end of Year 10, students must choose their study program for Years 11 and 12, comprised of an English subject and at least 10 other units from a list of given options. Generally, subjects each count for 2 units, with extensions on the base courses only offered in Year 12, accounting for one extra unit (Board of Studies, 2003; Warton 1997). While participants from the Year 10 class were not included in this study, the Year 11 subset was able

to discuss their choice of electives and how they designed their HSC-level study program, giving insight into the previous and future choices they would make. These decisions were influenced by the same factors specifically explored within the choices of the Year 9 and Year 11 subsets of this study, so have not been discussed further here except to point out the Year 10 grade as an additional point of choice for students in their involvement with Music education.

**HSC-Level study:** Over the final two years (Years 11 and 12) of secondary school, students must be involved in at least 10 units of study, including 2 units of English (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b; Warton, 1997). The final study program for Year 12 must be based on subjects studied in Year 11, with students only able to pick up extensions or drop a currently studied subject to design their timetables. During the Year 11 Music 1 course in this study, Ms Maple discussed the requirements of the HSC-level program with the whole class of students; a core performance, composition, one-hour listening exam and a Viva Voce (prepared musical speech and discussion) along with three additionally chosen electives of either performance, composition, or Viva Voces (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). This allowed time for students to make their decision about continuing with the HSC course, and how they will approach their elective selection within the subject. Previous investigations have found that the choices made by students as they progress between Year 11 and 12 amplify those initial decisions and emerging career thoughts from Year 10, as they get closer to the point of graduation and tertiary education to meet these aspirational goals (Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012).

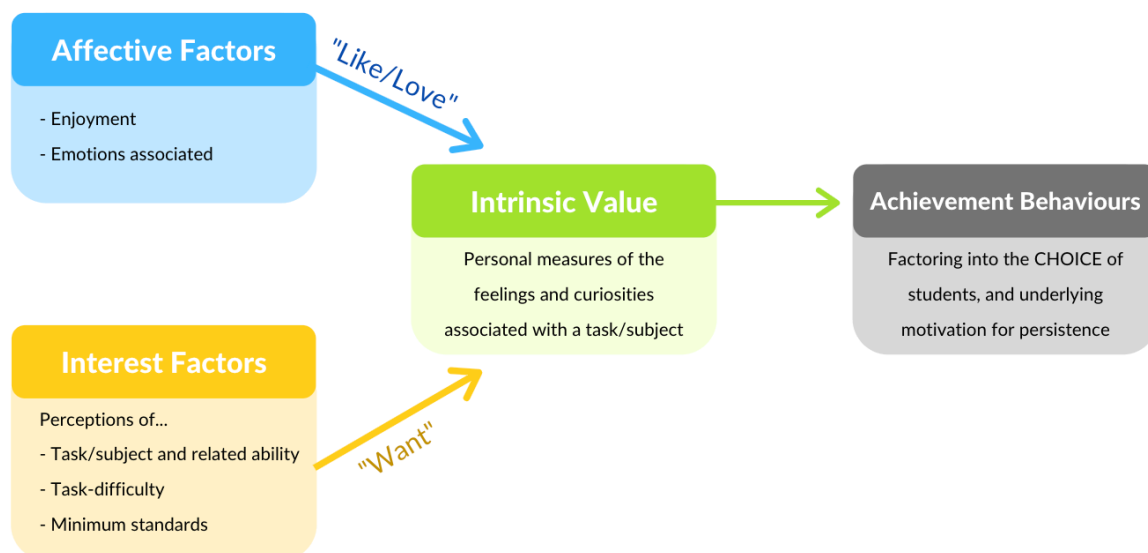
**Post-formal education:** Students must consider what they want to do after completing high school, and their aspirations beyond graduation. Once students reach the end of their formal schooling careers, marked by the completion of the HSC, they once again have a choice to make regarding their future involvement with Music education (Board of Studies, 2009a, 2009b). Participants within the Year 11 case of the current study all indicated some intention to continue Music either as a leisure activity or through professional, career avenues. There is also the possibility that students will seek no further intentional involvement with Music, deciding that education received at school satisfied their interests or that other interests were more significant. However, it is impossible to say that music could be completely removed from their lives as it is ingrained in everyday society and community life through ambient

sounds, background music and entertainment activities (Guido, 2014; McFerran, 2011; Merriam, 1964). For this reason, it is unlikely that students can disengage from Music entirely, but rather their intentional engagement in related tasks and activities. This also reiterates the significance of music as an innate part of human life, requiring some level of understanding and skill to interpret its influence and impact.

Results from this study suggest that students choose to study Music at school because of the value they hold for involvement, either intrinsically or by identifying a utility of the skill or knowledge. The intrinsic value of Music was influenced by the affective experiences and interest expressed by the individual towards the subject, shown in Figure 7.5. Data also showed that the utility value was directly impacted by goals and self-definition, which is represented in Figure 7.2. These two intrinsic and utility value measures interacted to influence the overall choice of students to engage and persist with Music as a subject.

**Figure 7.2**

*Model of the Influence of Affect and Interest on Intrinsic Value and Choice*



As represented in Figure 7.5, this study has shown that participants make the choice to be involved with Music education because of their intrinsic value for the subject, born out of their affective experience and interests. Although they may have considered a deeper intention or

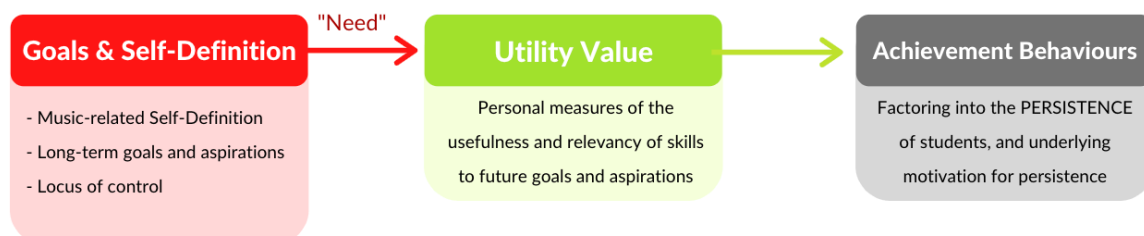


purpose for their study, participant data showed that the choice of Music as a subject was reliant on an individual's *like/love* (affect) of the subject and their *want* (interest) to do it. This was influenced by past experiences, as well as their perception of the learning environment including the teachers and peers involved. Similar findings were shown in a previous study which demonstrated that students participated in music ensembles because of a like, love and enjoyment of the subject and performing. Other key choice variables included relevance to their future careers, peer involvement and the 'fun' factor associated with Music (Baker, 2009).

In this study, students who chose and continued to choose Music through to HSC-level expressed a utility value for the subject, dependent on their individual goals and self-definition. Previous studies have shown that the determination of purpose was key in mustering the motivation to keep applying to tasks and new situations (Ball et al., 2016; Burak, 2014; Eccles, 1983). The more that this purpose aligned with personal goals, future aspirations and an individuals' self-definition, the stronger the motivation was to continue studying and persisting with Music (Ball et al., 2016; Freer & Evans, 2018, 2019; Myers, 2005). For example, Jenna and Mira indicated their choice of Music 1 and Entertainment Stage 6 courses were directly related to their aspirations to follow Music-related careers. Other participants such as Avery and Liam saw Music as part of themselves, and identified a need to continue because of this important relation to their self-definition. This developed the utility value an individual held towards the subject; a judgement of the relevance, applicability and usefulness of the skills and knowledge for themselves and future endeavours (as represented in Figure 7.3).

**Figure 7.3**

*Model of the Influence of Goals and Self-Definition on Utility Value and Persistence*



Within this study, if a participant was unable to see a direct or indirect relevance of studying Music to any future goal, they were likely to have ceased their involvement with the subject in favour of pursuing other courses that do align with future aspirations. However, if they were still able to acknowledge a value for Music, students would foresee themselves persisting with the subject as a hobby even if they did not consider it a viable career choice. This supports the findings of previous studies which suggest that acknowledging a utility value for a subject can determine whether or not individuals will persist beyond compulsory school boundaries (Ball et al., 2016; Burak, 2014; Freer & Evans, 2018; Galliot & Graham, 2015; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; Tang et al., 2008). Within the current study, passionate Music students demonstrated strong intrinsic and utility values, and wanted to pursue Music-related careers (in a variety of industries and faculties) or have Music as a part of their lives as a hobby moving forward. To have ceased their engagement would have been similar to amputating a part of their identities, which many sought to actively avoid in favour of continuation.

### ***7.1.2 What Reasons do Students Give for Choosing to Study Music as a Subject within the Context of NSW Australian Secondary Schooling?***

The individual and external factors influencing achievement behaviours of students in relation to Music education align with variables discussed in Eccles' theory and other related research (Burak, 2014; Eccles, 1983; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010), but demonstrate different relationships between factors. This body of literature helps to explain the combination and pathways of influence on overall academic choice, and affirm the significance of affect, interest, and GSD on the values and expectancies of individuals.

The reasoning behind an individual's subject decision-making process evolves and develops in complexity with age (Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Galliot & Graham, 2015; Rousseau & Venter, 2009; Tang et al., 2008), but becomes focused around a "like/love", "want" or "need" they associate with involvement. Previous research highlights that the choice of electives helps to influence the motivation and study volition of students, as they feel encouraged in learning what is personally interesting and relevant to them (Fujimoto & Matsuo, 2005). These align with psychological motivation, and expectancy-value variables of Affect ("like/love"), Interest ("want"), and Goals and Self-Definition ("need") that directly influence the achievement behaviours towards tasks and subjects (Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Fujimoto & Matsuo, 2005; Mandler, 2017; Thomson et al., 2018; Warton, 1997). Students describe making their

choice to study Music as a subject based around one, or a combination of “liking/loving”, “wanting” and “needing” the content, skills, environment or intrinsic qualities that music has. These individual likes, wants and needs are influenced by external contextual factors such as the cultural milieu, previous experiences and attributions, and perceptions of the learning environment that mediate the differences between individuals. These background influences help provide a level of predictability for individuals when choosing a subject to study (ie. “I know what to expect; I have enjoyed, found interesting and/or found necessary in the past and therefore want to experience that again”).

#### **7.1.2.1 Affective Factors: “I like/love to do Music”.**

These variables form the emotional component associated with involvement, and the feelings of satisfaction that motivate individuals to participate in further Music education. It includes the overall enjoyment and emotional connection that they feel towards Music, with students describe ‘liking’ or ‘loving’ to be involved in the subject. This ‘like/love’ is coupled with an internal sense of satisfaction and fulfilment that they personally associate with participation, feeling ‘good’ or ‘better’ after their engagement. This aligns with research suggesting the significant role Music plays in the lives of adolescents, mediating emotions and inciting a unique set of ‘feelings’ during involvement (Miranda, 2013; North et al., 2000; North & Hargreaves, 1999; Nuttall, 2008; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007). Students in the study expressed their enjoyment of external aspects such as the teacher, involvement with peers or specific tasks, along with internal measures of liking the intrinsic, aesthetic qualities and feelings associated with Music. These affective experiences, along with their interest in the subject help to develop intrinsic value for Music involvement.

#### **7.1.2.2 Interest Factors: “I need to do Music”.**

Interest variables include specific perceptions, curiosities and judgements related to Music as a task or subject. These relate to personal motivations to participate and are associated with the innate interest an individual holds towards Music which are influenced by their previous experiences, attributions and perceptions of the learning environment (Araneda et al., 2019; Dik & Rottinghaus, 2013; Lowe, 2011; O’Keefe et al., 2018). Interest surrounds personal perceptions specific to the task, including the difficulty, minimum standards and self-concept of ability, which establish attitudes towards engagement in Music as a task or subject (Eccles, 1983; Hu & Kando, 2017). Study data showed a majority of students ‘wanting’ to continue

with Music, linked with the general interest and curiosity they had for the related tasks, activities and skills. The interest an individual holds towards a subject, along with their affective experiences within the educational experiences, influences personal measures of intrinsic value.

#### **7.1.2.3 Goals and Self-Definition Factors: “I need to do Music”.**

Variables related to goals and self-definitions established help individuals to define the purpose they associate personally with participating in Music as a task or subject. Students describe a purpose for their involvement in the study of Music, usually associated to attaining certain goals, related to a particular aspiration, or as a way of fulfilling a part of their self-definition. This also involves their locus of control, as individuals make judgements about how their competency to engage with Music moving forward. These goals and self-definitions can develop from external influences, such as necessities for meeting curriculum requirements, or parental expectations, or personal purposes such as satisfying curiosity, pursuing goals or seeking the ‘feeling’ associated with involvement. These factors directly influence the utility value individuals connect with Music education, and their persistence within the subject and related tasks.

#### ***7.1.3 What Factors Influence Students’ Decisions about Commencing and Continuing to Study Music?***

Researchers have demonstrated the presence of external and individual factors that influence the academic choice behaviours of individuals (Ametller & Ryder, 2015; Ball et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2013; Eccles, 1983; Freer & Evans, 2018, 2019; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O’Neill, 2010; Naugah et al., 2020; Sankır & Sankır, 2019; Waters et al., 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This study found that individual factors such as the affective experience of the individual, their interest in the subject and their related goals and self-definition significantly impact the motivation and engagement of students in the Music classroom, as well as their ultimate choice of, persistence in and performance related to tasks and subjects. These factors are reflected not only identified within the current study, but also from the wider literature field related to subject choice and intentions to continue involvement in Music education individuals (Lowe, 2011; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2015; Rousseau & Venter, 2009; Warton, 1997). External factors such as the cultural milieu, previous experiences and perception of the learning environment play

important establishing roles in mediating the differences between individual attributions and perceptions, while individual factors such as the affect, interest and related Goals and Self-Definition (GSD) impact choices and persistence within tasks and subjects. These factors influence how students engage with, and experience Music education, and how this contributes to their intentions to continue involvement.

A combination of external and individual factors exist that impact the values and expectancies of students, which in turn influence their achievement behaviours. Unique differences between the external factors of individuals influence their perceptions and variations in effect of individual factors on overall achievement behaviours.

#### **7.1.3.1 External Factors.**

External factors encompass the contextual variables that emerged throughout the data analysis, and take into account the learning environment, and previous experiences that affect current engagement and achievement behaviours. These factors mediated the individual differences in perception and approach, and the overall impact of various individual factors. As a result, the external factors can be explained as influencing the engagement an individual has in particular tasks or in the subject, but not directly impacting their choices and persistence behaviours. Instead, the external factors help establish affective responses, interest, and the goals and self-definition connected with involvement to promote continued engagement.

The **cultural milieu** identified for this study included the context of the school and classrooms involved, parental interactions with the student in Music-related situations and identifying information regarding the participants' age, gender and family status. School is considered an important contextual factor in the decision-making process of students (Anders et al., 2018). Therefore, a comprehensive site and case contextual profile was developed as part of the research procedures for each class to establish these influences on students (Anders et al. 2018). As the specific experiences of students with Music education at their school were of interest to this study, their broader socioeconomic status and sociohistorical factors were not collected or analysed. Previous research and Eccles' original theory indicates the influence of the cultural milieu although not the direct relationship with achievement behaviours (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). For this reason, some

information was collected from participants, with other background details gathered as necessary if deemed relevant to their experience of Music. Unique contextual information, such as familial relationships or parental influences were then included in participant vignettes to tell the story of how these variables influenced each individual's experience of and choices related to Music. Analysis revealed influence on the personal value of Music, but not directly on their choices or persistence behaviours.

**Previous experiences** provide the underlying basis for skills, knowledge and attributions regarding personal involvement in Music education (Eccles, 1983; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; McPherson et al., 2015). While students *should* have had exposure and experiences with Music in primary school (Board of Studies, 2006), studies have shown that the quality and quantity of these differs greatly depending on the teacher, school and resources available (Capaldo et al., 2014; Rogerson, 2015; Russell-Bowie, 2010, 2013). Many of the Chestnut High School students noted that their first memorable introduction to Music came in secondary school, calling into question whether the foundations have been established strongly enough during primary school Stages 1 – 3 (Years 1 to 6) to build upon in the latter half of the curriculum (Stages 4-6 – Years 7 to 12). It was noted that primary Music programs were often fleeting, and lacked stability as they would change hands of responsibility and organisation within the school. Previous studies have shown that although generalist teachers are expected to develop appropriate learning programs for their students to navigate the Music curriculum, their inexperience, lack of confidence and pressures from other subjects and staff often leads to the provision of inadequate or un-equal learning experiences (Bowell, 2010; Lowe & Lummins, 2013; Peterson, 2014; Russell-Bowie, 2009, 2010, 2013). This makes it difficult to sustain a quality Music education throughout primary school, which sequentially develops skills needed to approach the secondary curriculum with ease and comfort.

However, the adolescent experience of learning Music “cannot be adequately accounted for through the influence of formal Music education alone” (Lonie & Dickens, 2016, p. 88; Putkinen et al., 2015; Rodriguez, 2009). Opportunities such as instrument and voice lessons, ensemble participation and attendance at Music camps occur outside of the school environment and curriculum, and can require financial or logistical outlay in order to participate. These provide students with opportunities to practice and learn in situ, around likeminded peers and from knowledgeable third parties such as teachers, composers, musicians or performers (Lonie

& Dickens, 2016). In this study, participants described their extra-curricular experiences as particularly enjoyable, influential and inspirational. Participants indicated that the majority of these experiences were initiated, supported or sponsored by their family who provided the financial and practical means of participating. This also meant that students could begin learning Music as young as their family decides would be appropriate, rather than having to wait for formal schooling programs to commence studies. This was demonstrated in the case of Liam, whose parents enrolled him in a Music school in Ireland at 3-years-old. Through childhood exposure to Music, skills and knowledge are able to develop in complexity to meet the needs of the individual through personalized tuition and progressive engagement overtime, far more than would be capable in the restricted primary Music classroom context (Burak, 2014). Participants in this study who described being deeply invested in Music were involved in extra-curricular musical activities, both as a child and currently which provided a strong foundation for their subsequent engagement and learning.

The individual **perception of the learning environment** also plays an important role in influencing student engagement in Music education, with students primarily exposed to the subject through their classroom interactions with each other and the teacher. At Chestnut High School, participants expressed feeling safe in their Music classroom, which allowed them to be part of a supportive, creative community in which they could express themselves and feel heard. Previous studies have shown that active, positive participation is associated with the development of a supportive environment that meets the emotional, cognitive and academic needs of individuals, through a classroom culture of mutual respect, challenge and safety (Giebelhausen, 2015; Purvis et al., 2015). This evolves from the pedagogical design decisions of the teacher, as well as the attitude and approach of peers in the classroom.

The **teacher** is an integral component of the learning environment, creating the experiences of students in their classroom. In this study, students described enjoying Music because of the supportive, enthusiastic nature of the teacher who encouraged individuality, personal goal setting and help-seeking behaviours. This developed comfort and confidence between individuals, as well as enabled the formation of strong learning relationships with Mrs Maple. The participants acknowledged how Mrs Maple identified their stress, and worked with each individual to find a balance and understand how Music could support them through their issues. These findings are supported in other studies which emphasised the important role teachers

play in mediating an individual's approach and attitude in the classroom (Capaldo et al., 2014; Lonie & Dickens, 2016; McPherson, 2013; Parkes & Daniel, 2013). Teachers are also an integral element of Eccles' original theory, although their influence is grouped with other socialisers of peers and parents (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The present study has demonstrated that teachers have a different method of influencing their students' achievement behaviours, in establishing the learning environment from which to engage. It is then the individual's perception of this context that factors into their affective experience in the classroom, and the interest shown towards different tasks and situations.

The social aspect of the learning environment was also identified within the student perception, noting the influence of **peers** on engagement in the Music classroom, tasks and subject (Fujimoto & Matsuo, 2005). Although most were not social friends outside of the Music classroom, individuals had established a mutual respect towards one another that lead to the offering of help, support and encouragement when needed. New social relationships were formed in the Music classroom that helped each student find a place and a sense of significance. While participants were very emphatic that their friends had no impact on their choice of electives, it became clear in this study that the atmosphere created by classroom peers made Music more enjoyable and desirable for those who wanted to take part. Simply being part of the class inspired those less motivated to get involved, after seeing the majority of their peers attempt an activity or take part in a group performance. Previous investigations have also found that support from peers, and an element of social involvement were major influencing factors in the individual selection of activities (Mitchell et al., 2015). The influence of peers can also be accounted for in Eccles' original theory within the impact of socialisers, however the collected data demonstrates greater connections between peers and the learning environment than through other avenues (Eccles, 1983). In conjunction with the teacher, peers involved in a subject help establish the atmosphere within the learning environment and create a sense of comfort and safety for those involved.

#### **7.1.3.2 Individual Factors.**

Individual factors include the 'personal' variables emerging throughout the analysis process, and acknowledge the influence of emotions, intrinsic curiosity, self-concept and goal-setting on overall achievement behaviours. These factors centre around the three central statements offered by participants as reasons for their study of, and continuation with Music at school:



- “I like/love Music” relating to their *affective experience and connections* with Music
- “I want to do Music” relating to their *interest* and task/subject-related perceptions of Music
- “I need to do Music” relating to the *goals and self-definition* related to the individuals’ study of Music

These individual factors are influenced by external factors of cultural milieu, previous experience and attributions, and perceptions of the learning environment, to affect how students make choices regarding their study of and continuation with Music. The affect, interest, and goals and self-definition held towards a task or subject in turn influences the values and expectancies for success.

#### *7.1.3.2.1 Affective Experiences.*

Participants in the study continually noted the significant influence of affective experiences and factors on their choice and persistence in Music, emphasised through their like and love for the subject. This included both the emotional connection they felt towards Music and the enjoyment they experienced throughout participation. This innate feeling of satisfaction and emotional fulfilment evoked by Music is a unique feature of the subject (Burak, 2014), which is able to transcend the boundaries of formal education to affect students long after they leave school (Bennett et al., 2013; Kewalramani et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2008). The notion of affective influences on the choice and persistence within a subject is acknowledged within the intrinsic value component of Eccles’ (1983) GMAC framework. However, data from this study has shown the increased significance of affect in the decision-processes related to Music education. Enjoying Music has connections with the innate interest an individual may have, but is also linked with music’s unique ability to tap into emotional and memory centres of the brain (Vuilleumier & Trost, 2015). Overwhelmingly, studies have noted the significant influence of affective factors on choices made by students, reasoning that their emotional connection and enjoyment of the subject and related tasks determined their decision to continue (Baker, 2009; Bartholomew & Moeed, 2012; Rodeiro, 2007).

Participants in the study highlighted their **emotional connection** with Music, noting the significance of the feeling they derived from involvement. While all descriptions varied in their wording, there was an overwhelmingly positive association, leading to individuals feeling happier, relaxed, excited and more balanced from participating in musical activities. Research

into music's effect on the brain has revealed significant interactions between the ventral striatum, the hypothalamus and the ventral tegmental area of the brainstem, involved in producing and distributing dopamine throughout the body (Cohen, 2009; Rogenmoser et al., 2018; Sachs et al., 2015). Individuals experience a chemical release from listening to and playing music which works consciously and sub-consciously to affect our moods and attitudes (Ford & Tamir, 2014; Vuilleumier & Trost, 2015). Moreover, another study emphasised that people want to experience pleasant emotions more than unpleasant ones, and that the more familiar you are with an emotion, the more likely you will want to experience it again (Ford & Tamir, 2014). This notion of 'liking' an experience helps to mediate the relationship between familiarity of experience and the desire to realise these in the current moment (Ford & Tamir, 2014). Previous studies into student engagement with Music education support the importance of the emotional connection students have in fostering motivation as demonstrated in this study (Baker, 2009; Ball et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2015; Rodeiro, 2007). A systematic review of literature related to the aesthetic pleasure derived from Music involvement emphasised the connection with positive feelings and bodily sensations (Sachs et al., 2015). On the other hand, the way music expresses melancholy and sadness allows for the safe experiencing of these emotions without the usual negative associations (Sachs et al., 2015). This is particularly significant in the lives of adolescents who are already experiencing instability in hormones, friendships and academic self-concepts as they progress towards adulthood.

In this study, participants continually emphasised the **enjoyment** associated with choosing and participating in Music. This was connected with the emotions they felt as part of involvement, but also the preference for the classroom environment and atmosphere that many showed. Participants were eager to give up their lunch times to play with ensembles, practice their instruments or work on compositions. This supports the findings of other investigations which concluded the high levels of enjoyment, satisfaction and pleasure that students derive from their involvement in Music (Baker, 2009; Rodeiro, 2007). An investigation into the engagement of girls in physical education showed that the provision of choice itself was important in making an activity enjoyable, as students were able to exercise autonomy over their participation. This evoked positive subject perceptions which could change the attitude and behaviours of those involved (Mitchell et al., 2015). This suggests a therapeutic affect, with music shown in other studies to help modulate emotions, support memory and develop attention control (Vuilleumier & Trost, 2015).

#### *7.1.3.2.2 Interest.*

Individual measures of interest were shown in this study as significant influences on the participant experience of wanting to choose and persist with Music. This included their perception of difficulty, minimum standards and self-concept of ability which mediated the level of interest shown towards the subject and related tasks. Participants tended to seek out subjects that aligned with their personal curiosities, which they often had previous experiences in and were connected with affective and learning environment factors. They also described links between their interest in Music, and the intrinsic value they ascribe, supported by previous studies concluding that that interest-based activities help to develop an internal sense of self, which in turn effect the intrinsic motivation of students (Mitchell et al., 2015). This relationship is also demonstrated in applications of Eccles' theory (Barnes et al., 2005; McPherson et al., 2015; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Mendolia & Walker, 2014), emphasising the importance of interest in the decision-making process in subject selection.

The individual interest shown by a participant was linked with their **perception of difficulty** associated with Music and related tasks, describing this as a challenge within this study. Rather than ascribing an overall difficulty with the subject, participants in this study expressed the challenges associated with their involvement in Music such as reading scores and applying musical concepts. Practical tasks were perceived as more enjoyable while still requiring a great deal of skill, and presenting a challenge for new students. Interestingly, participants discussed that it was this level of challenge and variety of activities that kept them interested and wanting to participate in class. There was also a general consensus that without a challenge, Music would quickly become boring and no longer enjoyable. This suggests a need to rethink the notion of perceiving overall difficulty into a concept of associated challenges to align with the nuances required within subject and task participation.

In this study, individual interest was also influenced by the **perception of minimum standards**, specific to a task or subject including judgements of usefulness and importance to succeed in relation to the challenge posed (Eccles, 1983). This determined what participants regarded as important, and the level of effort they therefore applied to succeed. While many of the participants expressed that it was not as important to do well in Music as it was in other subjects such as English, mathematics and science, they still discussed the importance of

applying effort and ‘doing your best’. This was often coupled with a sentiment that Music held a significant role in their life, whether or not it was related to their future career aspirations. By making judgements about the importance and usefulness of Music, individuals developed a perception of their minimum standard of achievement and engagement they should apply. This in turn impacts the interest an individual has towards Music and related tasks and mediates the choices they make towards continuing involvement.

Participants in this study used their **self-concept of abilities** within Music to determine their individual level of interest towards the subject and related tasks. Some noted being better at practical tasks than those requiring aural or theoretical Music knowledge, linking back to their lack of exposure during primary school, through extra-curricular opportunities or simply enjoying ‘doing’ Music more than ‘thinking about’ it. Overall, participants noted themselves as either ‘good’ or ‘average’ in Music with links apparent between this self-concept and the choices made towards involvement. This confirms findings of previous studies which concluded that individuals choose subjects that they feel competent to achieve in, in turn enhancing their self-esteem and motivation to persevere throughout tasks and challenges presented (Dik & Rottinghaus, 2013; Eccles, 1983; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; Rodeiro, 2007). This study also posits the relationship between self-concept of abilities and the degree of challenge associated with a task or subject, as students use their self-concepts to judge whether or not they will be able to succeed.

#### *7.1.3.2.3 Goals and Self-Definition.*

The goals and self-definition (GSD) of individuals involved in Music were shown to influence a need or purpose behind involvement within this study. According to Eccles’ original theory, GSD was directly impacted by the self-definition, goals and aspirations, and locus of control of an individual which influenced their overall choices and persistence within tasks and subjects (Eccles, 1983). This study observed similar links, although highlighted an underlying connection with affect and interest factors to impact the choice of Music, and the likelihood of continuing with the subject when it becomes an elective area of study.

The **self-definition** of an individual in relation to their Music involvement was identified as integral to their engagement within the classroom. Individual motivation to participate in Music education became stronger as the knowledge, skills and content were more aligned with

personal self-definitions (Jensen, 2003; McPherson, 2013; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). Participants in this study indicated different relationships with Music, ranging from a curiosity to a deep intrinsic connection, which aligned with their descriptions of being ‘musical’ or ‘non-musical’. Eccles’ theory suggests that students will participate in tasks that align with their view of self, or those that help to develop skills related to future self-development (Eccles, 1983).

The study also identified a group of students who defined themselves by their Music involvement. These students indicated a strong **want** to be in Music. They wanted to be involved as they were able to pursue knowledge that satisfied their concept of self and innate, deep curiosities (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000). In essence, Music had become part of who they were and how they saw themselves; it was an innate component of their self-definition, self-concept and emerging notion of identity (Jensen, 2003; McCarthy, 1995; Meeus, 2011; Meeus et al., 2010; North & Hargreaves, 1999). Not only could these students acknowledge a deep fascination and satisfaction connected to their learning of Music, but they were able to see some relevance (either direct or indirect) of the skills and knowledge to their long-term goals and life after school (Guo et al., 2015). The understanding of a self-definition related to a particular subject has also been shown to predict occupational aspirations over time, indicating the integral role this plays in promoting career goals and intentions (Guo et al., 2015).

In this study, the choice of Music was often linked with specific **goals and aspirations** which were related to student involvement. The short-term goals expressed were often basic, simple and relatively uncomplicated to achieve for example playing a new song, finding out more about a certain style of music, or understanding notation written on the treble clef. Long-term goals such as learning how to fluently read music in a range or combination of clefs, playing an instrument such as the piano with two hands or developing performance confidence were often linked with aspirations or future occupational intentions of the individual. These differentiations demonstrate a link between interest factors and the goals and self-definition of individuals. Participants who only identified short-term goals were able to complete these within relatively short periods of time such as over a year of study or with a few months of practice. These milestones were perceived as ‘easier’, with less time, effort or attention required to succeed. While short term goals encouraged some to continue to further long-term goals, others were satisfied with their completion and ceased involvement entirely. The long-

term goals expressed by participants in this study were often more complex and required greater cognitive load and focus than short-term goals. These goals were perceived as relatively 'harder' to accomplish, with students tackling these challenges over a number of years.

Participants who expressed these more complex long-term goals as part of their narratives about Music involvement were more likely to be interested in pursuing Music education after school, either as a leisure activity or professional career pathway. They acknowledged the importance of developing these skills early in their lives so as to have the best control and capacity to apply them throughout life. The identification of aspirational goals firstly required participants to have an idea of what they would like to 'be or do' before involving abstract thinking to consider the knowledge or skills needed in that chosen profession. Interestingly, participants indicated a wide range of long-term goals that were directly, indirectly and not related to Music involvement which seemed to mediate the utility value they ascribed and intentions to persist with the subject at school and beyond. A prior study found that career aspirations were a consequential decision, which lead to targeted and reciprocal development of skills in order to achieve the set goal (Lauermann et al., 2017). This also links with original GMAC theoretical assumptions that aspirational goals have a direct influence on utility value associated with a task or subject (Eccles, 1983). The data in this study further indicates this relationship, and the subsequent effect on persistence within Music education, as those acknowledging a clear purpose behind their engagement remain more motivated to continue.

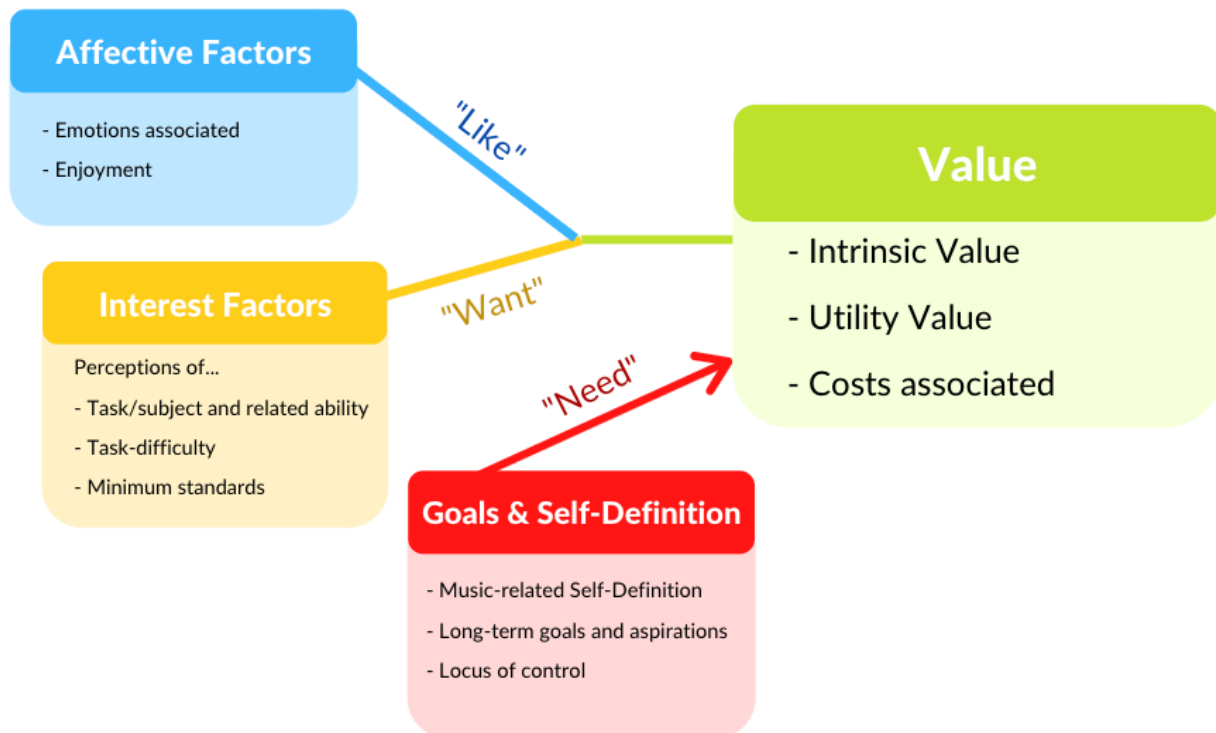
A students' goals and self-definition in relation to Music was also shown to be related to their **locus of control**, or the extent to which they feel intellectually responsible for and in control of achievement outcomes (Agnew et al., 1993; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Rotter, 1966). While specific measures for the locus of control of participants in this study were collected, data was gathered about the way they saw themselves in relation to Music and their abilities within. Research seems to indicate a stronger relationship between locus of control and specific performance- and success-related variables, rather than to the development of task or subject values (Agnew et al., 1993; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). For this reason, it has been included as an influencing variable within this study, but further discussion of specific relationships to other variables have been omitted due to lack of supporting data.

### 7.1.3.3 Value.

This study highlighted the significant influence of value on the ultimate achievement behaviours of choice and persistence with a subject, and how this value is influenced by other individual factors such as affect, interest and GSD. These values take the form of personal beliefs and measures of importance regarding Music that help individuals form a mental picture of their reason for involvement. Combined with expectancies for success, the values held towards engagement in Music education directly influence achievement behaviours of choice and persistence. The relationship between previously identified factors and the overall value held for Music as a task or subject is shown in Figure 7.4.

**Figure 7.4.**

*Model of the Influence of Individual Factors on Value related to the choice of Music Education*



Similar to Eccles' (1983) original theory, this study highlighted three main aspects within the personal value ascribed to Music as a subject and within related tasks; the intrinsic value, utility value and costs associated with involvement. For the participants in this study to achieve their goals, and follow their interests and engage in affective experiences, they needed to acknowledge some purpose for doing so, while maintaining personal standards of applying

effort, focus and resources that complemented the weight of these values for each individual. The combination of intrinsic values derived from affect and interest, and utility value linked with goals and self-definition, along with the influence of costs associated with involvement (such as time, practice, financial resources, or cognitive load), were integral in determining the motivation of an individual to engage with Music education. These values each had different relationship to the choice of and persistence in Music but contributed in conjunction with individual expectancies to overall achievement behaviours.

As Year 9 is the first opportunity students are given to be active designers of their course of study out of a wide range of subject choices (Board of Studies, 2003; Warton, 1997), Music is only chosen by those who value it highly. Perhaps they have enjoyed it previously or found part of the content particularly interesting or are working towards a goal. Those who do not have any intrinsic value associated to Music will simply cease their engagement by not selecting Music as an elective area of study. At this initial stage of elective choice, many students are still experimenting with interests as they develop self-concepts of ability and their own self-definition in relation to Music. Participants from the Year 9 group at Chestnut High School indicated that their “live/love” of the subject, along with their related interests developed an intrinsic value and drive to choose Music as an elective. Students selecting Music usually have had a history of previous exposure to formal Music education either at school or in extra-curricular activities, or with influential past experiences. These students often appear more eager, enthusiastic, and independently-capable on tasks during lessons. The participants in the Year 9 case demonstrated intrinsic value for the subject, connected to measures of affect and/or interest in participating. Their choices to continue for Stage 6 study were based in this intrinsic value, along with the consideration of goals and self-definition to determine what they enjoyed doing, were interested in doing, and wanted to continue doing for at least the next two years. For the participants in the Year 9 case, the choices made about Stage 6 (HSC) study reflected long-term goals and aspirations, so the persistence-related achievement behaviours could be said to be more related to the future relevancy of the subject to the individual, than their intrinsic value of the tasks or skills involved.

#### *7.1.3.3.1 Intrinsic Value.*

The intrinsic value held by an individual towards a subject or task is comprised of the interest and enjoyment associated with their engagement and can be described as the deeper level of



personal connection held with a task or subject (Eccles, 1983). There appears to be a direct relationship between these factors, as expressed in the original theory and indicated within the current study in the way that variations in one influence variations in another. Intrinsic value is also dependent on attributions of past success and failure, and affective responses to these situations (Eccles, 1983). This was clearly demonstrated in the case of Jenna, whose past negative experiences with the eisteddfod system and turning down of a place in a performing arts high school inspired an increase in motivation to succeed and pursue Music after school. The study also identified an intrinsic value in all students related to Music or the study of another subject that was highly interesting and enjoyable to the individual. Participants expressed that Music satisfied some deeper part of themselves, aligning with personal interests and long-term goals that helped them to sustain engagement during tasks. These students usually held some background memories of involvement in Music related activities, indicating links between the intrinsic value ascribed and the previous experiences and attributions connected to Music. Research has indicated that interest established in the early school years impacts future course selection and academic persistence, highlighting the underlying influence of external factors on intrinsic value (Ball et al., 2016). Intrinsic values were also shown as supporting persistence and deep engagement of students within tasks and subjects for longer periods of time, as compared to peers demonstrating lesser levels of intrinsic value (Ball et al., 2016). Another study also identified the reciprocal relationship between intrinsic value and achievement during the high school to tertiary education transition, suggesting the importance of this factor in the adolescent decision-making process (Guo et al., 2015).

#### *7.1.3.3.2 Utility Value.*

The utility value held towards Music was directly influenced by an individuals' perception of usefulness, and their development of long-term goals and aspirations related to the subject and tasks. This aligns with Eccles' original theory which suggests utility value as a measure of the importance of a task for a future goal that could be related or unrelated to the actual task at hand (Eccles, 1983). Data collected in this study highlighted the significance of Music to individual participants, as well as their measures of relatedness to future goals and aspirations. In combination, these highlighted the utility value each held for Music.

Within this study, students identified Music as either;

- Personally important and significant [through an identification with Music as part of themselves, innate interest and inherent satisfaction, and closely related to value assigned]. This was shown in the cases of Liam, Max, Jenna and Mira; and/or
- Practically important and significant [through identifying a usefulness associated with particular skills, tasks or knowledge]. This was shown in the cases of Avery, Holly, Dean, Grace and Isiah; or
- Neither important nor significant [through seeing a greater importance and usefulness in pursuing other skills, tasks or knowledge]. This was shown in the cases of Annie, Carly, Jasmine, Alice and James.

The perception of Music's utility value is determined by each individual depending on the significance of Music in the life of an individual (both in and outside of school) and its relevance to future goals and aspirations. Achievement behaviours and attitudes are then instated in order to fulfil the purpose behind these perceptions, which show similarities with the literature field (Ding et al., 2013). A further investigation demonstrated that goals and aspirations were significant variables in determining utility value, or the applicability of these skills to future activities (Rodeiro, 2007). In this study, students who recognised Music as personally significant aligned their self-definitions closely with their participation and continued to engage as it fulfilled an innate part of their self, regardless of their perception of Music's usefulness. However, whether personally significant or not, most participants acknowledged some form of practical significance behind their involvement in Music as an elective subject.

Many studies highlight the key influence that utility value has on overall choice and determination displayed within tasks and subjects (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Rodeiro, 2007). Within the present study, the majority of students expressed some utility value or measure of significance for Music, seeing it as either directly or indirectly linked with their future aspirations. A smaller number of participants (Jenna, Mira, Liam and Max) articulated that Music was their occupation of choice, specifically identifying skills and knowledge that would be useful in career pathways. Interestingly, Avery and Mira both discussed the limited opportunities within commonly perceived Music careers such as performers, artists and composers while Jenna discussed wanting to pursue other sides of the industry such as

entertainment management or stage direction. This is similar to the findings of a previous study, in which the majority of participants did not view Music as a viable future career field, but instead saw it as generally useful to leisure and life (Burak, 2014). Students decide what is important to them at a very young age, which informs their subsequent judgements about efficacies for related tasks and their identification of a utility value connected with the task or subject (Burak, 2014). This utility value is needed in order for an individual to be motivated to complete it, determined as a key factor in mediating their ultimate subject choice (Burak, 2014; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; Roderio, 2007). In this study, students who were able to identify the practical usefulness of Music could see short-term, long-term and/or future benefits to their involvement. This indicates a relationship with goals and self-definition factors, and ultimate effects on persistence behaviours. They were able to acknowledge a utility value associated with Music, and recognised how the skills, tasks and knowledge being practiced currently would aid in the pursuit of related goals, which was shown in previous studies to be the main reason influencing the continuation of study in a particular subject area (Burak, 2014; Eccles, 1983).

#### ***7.1.3.3.3 Cost.***

The consideration of cost, including the time and resources required to be involved in Music and the loss of valued alternatives such as socialising or participation in other activities was identified as a factor influencing the choices and persistence of the participants in the study. Eccles' theory identifies cost as a critical value component, whose negative aspects influence the engagement of students in tasks and subjects (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Both Jenna and Avery indicated they were in Music lessons previously, but had to stop due to financial constraints, while Jasmine, Carly and Alice all discussed their excitement to save up and purchase an instrument of their own. While these were not specifically reasons mentioned for choosing or continuing with Music, the significant role they played in mediating the ability of students to engage must be noted. A participant may have chosen to study Music as an elective, but those who had identified an intrinsic and utility value associated were often able to overlook or overcome the costs to focus on the benefits of involvement.

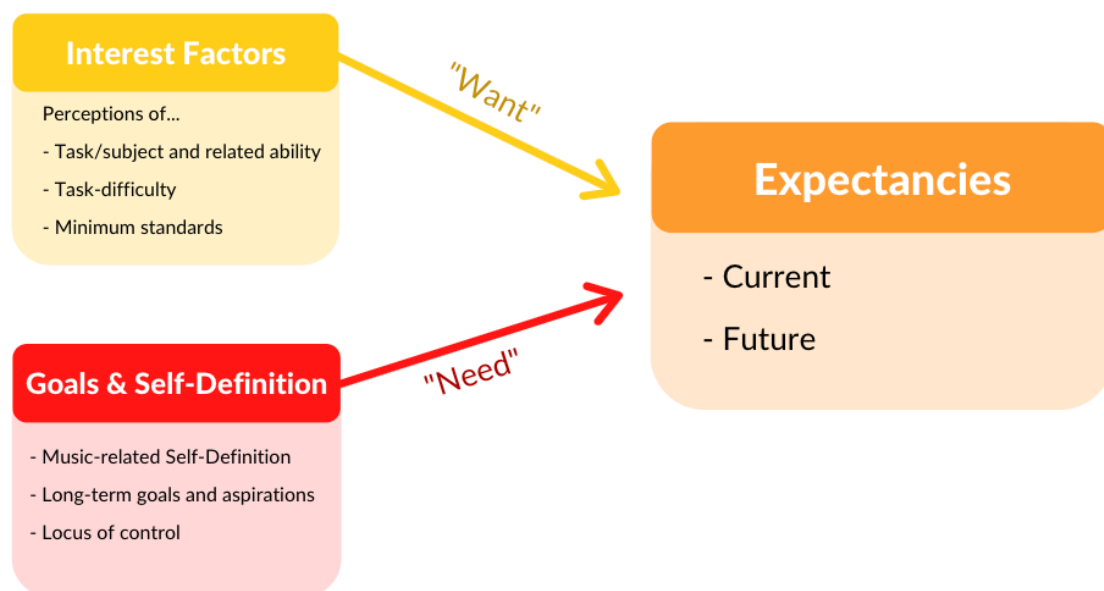
#### ***7.1.3.4 Expectancies.***

Results from the study showed the development of expectancies for success by individuals from their interest factors, as well as their related goals and self-definition. This contributed to

current and future expectations of success, which in turn impacted the achievement behaviours of students. However, participants in this study did not express expectancies as specifically factoring into their choice of Music education, or desire to persist with the subject. The relationship between previously identified factors and the overall expectancies held for Music as a task or subject is shown in Figure 7.5.

**Figure 7.5.**

*Model of the Influence Individual factors on Expectancies related to the choice of Music Education*



The results reported here are in line with other research conducted in applying EVT to subject choice, which reveals the relationship between expectancies and performance indicators such as grade or outcome (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). As this study did not collect data related to the statistical success of students, the relationship between expectancies and this particular achievement behaviour cannot be demonstrated. This may also be a reason why expectancies were not shown to be significant factors in the present study, with values emerging as the key influencers on choice and persistence, consistent with previous research (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Eccles' original theory suggests the direct influence of self-concept of ability and the perception of task difficulty on an individual's expectations for success, with indirect influences from past experiences, attributions, goals and expectancies of others (Barnes et al.,

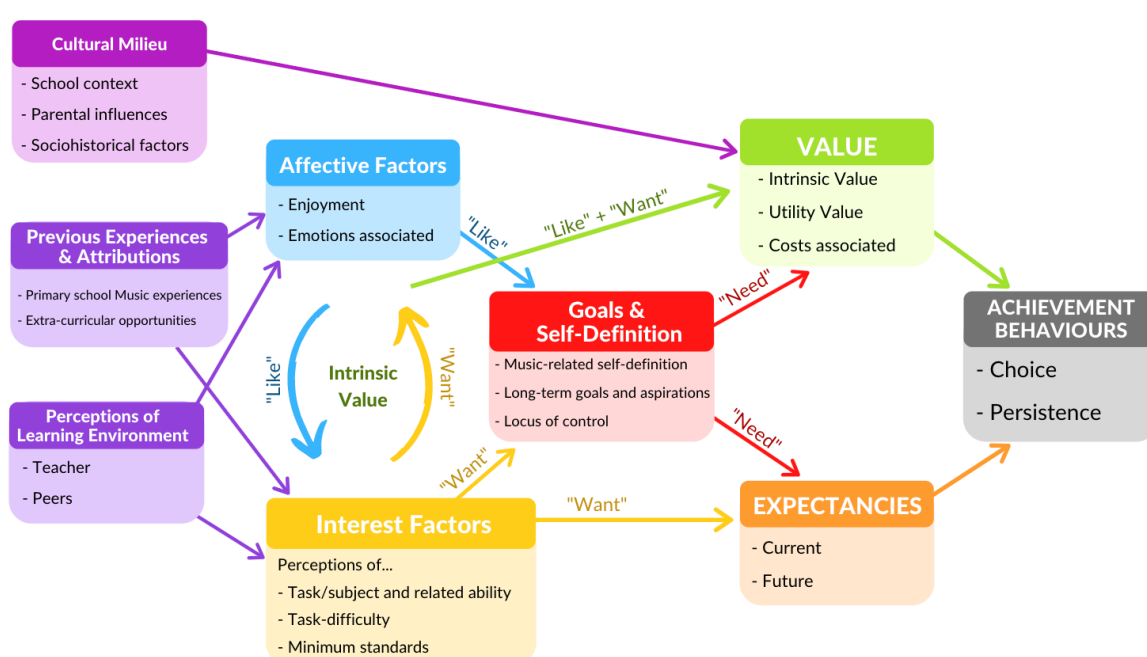
2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Results of Eccles and Wigfield's (1994) study to test the fit of their model, identified one significant factor contributing to the expectancies of individuals; the perception of how good they were and how well they will do in future. While these relationships were shown in the current study, with participants expressing what they currently expected of themselves, the subject and related tasks, they were not shown to have as significant influence on the overall choices and persistence of individuals in Music.

#### 7.1.4 How do these Factors Interact to Shape Students' Choices to Study Music?

External and individual factors that emerged during the analysis aligned with those from Eccles' original theory, with some of the same influence pathways. However, new relationships and links also emerged which have been represented in Figure 7.6.

**Figure 7.6.**

*Revised Model of Academic Choices related to Music Education as a Result of this Study*



The model depicted in Figure 7.6 suggests a new way to conceptualise the influence of these variables on overall values and expectancies developed for Music education, and the subsequent achievement behaviours demonstrated. It represents the underlying context that is established by the individuals' cultural milieu, previous experiences and attributions, and perceptions of the learning environment, which have mediating effects on the other individual

factors involved in choice. Although the cultural milieu of individuals was not identified as specific reasons for the choice of, or persistence in Music, these external factors have been shown in the current study and previous investigations to influence the individual differences between participants and their overall effect on achievement behaviours (Barnes et al., 2005; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Lauermann et al., 2017; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

The revised model also emphasises the impact of affect and interest in developing intrinsic value for Music, and the strong influence this measure has on the choice of students. Simply, when asked why they chose Music, participants identified their enjoyment and interest in the tasks and skills that were involved. These were influenced by the previous experiences of students, so that those with more positive or stronger memories associated with Music were more likely to have emotions and interest connected currently. This was also supported by the individual perceptions of the learning environment, as participants discussed the influence of the teacher and peers on their affect and interest involved. The model also demonstrates links between the affective experience of students, and their interest shown towards the task and subject, as directly influencing the goals and self-definition related to Music involvement.

The goals and self-definition of individuals is demonstrated in the new arrangement of Eccles' model as the 'need' to be involved in Music education as expressed by students. These were comprised of the long-term and aspirational goals set by the individual, combined with the way they conceptualised themselves in relation to musical tasks and content. Interest factors influenced the way students developed these goals and self-definitions, as their perception of challenge, ability and minimum standards were used to inform subsequent engagement. Participants discussed their related goals and their musical self-definitions that defined the way they understood the usefulness and relevance of their current engagement to future endeavours. This demonstrates a link between the goals and self-definition of individuals, and their measures of utility value, impacting how students would continue with Music, persisting in tasks and deciding to be involved year after year when it aligned with a goal or intention.

Ultimately, this new model arrangement upholds the significance that values and expectancies have on the achievement behaviours of students. Specifically, data from this study revealed the importance of intrinsic and utility values on choice and persistence, with affective experiences,

interest and goals and self-definition factoring into these values. Underlying influences from external factors helped to mediate individual differences between individual factors, and the overall choices and persistence with Music demonstrated by individuals. Current and future expectancies of the self, success and Music overall existed within the data but were not widely mentioned as influences on the choices and persistence of individuals.

## **7.2 Implications for the Application of Eccles' Theory**

Results from the current study reveal support for various elements of Eccles' original theory, while also presenting some implications for future application of the General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) to Music education. Importantly, all of the variables from the GMAC appeared in the data analysis, although in different groupings and relationships that reflect the significance of each expressed by the participants. Eccles' (1983) theory suggests the influence of four main groups of variables:

1. Perceptions of socialisers' attitudes and expectations (including parents, teachers and peers)
2. Student interpretations and attributions of past events (including previous experiences and exposure in childhood both in formal and informal learning contexts)
3. Student goals and self-definition (including the critical self-concept related to the task or subject, future goals and aspirations, and their perception of minimum standards)
4. Student task-specific beliefs (including the self-concept of ability and perception of task difficulty)

These in turn were theorised to influence measures of value such as intrinsic, utility and attainment value as well as costs associated, and the current and future expectancies for success (Eccles, 1983). The values and expectancies held towards a subject were then said to influence the achievement behaviours of choice, persistence and performance. This study showed support for these variables in a new arrangement, with distinctions between the external and contextual factors in comparison to individual factors in the way they impacted achievement behaviours. When making Music education related academic choices, the current study's data suggests the influence of external factors specific to the individual including their:

- Cultural Milieu (including the influence of parents, school contexts and other sociohistoric factors);
- Previous experiences and attributions (including previous experiences in primary school, and through extra-curricular opportunities); and

- Perceptions of learning environment (including views of the teacher and peers involved in the classroom).

The external factors help mediate the differences in individual factors and how these ultimately affect the values and expectancies held towards involvement. These individual factors revolve around three main sentiments expressed by students as their reasons for involvement in and continuation of Music education which are:

- “I like/love Music” (or the *affective factor* including their emotional connection to Music and satisfaction derived from participating);
- “I want to do Music” (or the *interest factor* including their perceptions of challenge, minimum standards and self-concept of ability related to tasks and the subject); and/or
- “I need to do Music” (or the *goals and self-definition factor* including the relevant self-definition, goals, future aspirations and locus of control linked with involvement).

These individual factors have specific relationships with developing value for Music as a subject, with affect and interest combining to influence intrinsic value while the individual goals and self-definition impact measures of utility value. These values, along with consideration of the costs associated with involvement, impact the achievement behaviours of students. Findings from this study suggest that intrinsic value specifically links with the choice of Music as a subject, while the utility value becomes more significant in the decision-making process as students become older. In this study, utility value was also shown to have a strong mediating effect on the persistence of an individual within a task or subject, as engagement was dependent on the relevancy and usefulness of the current activity to future endeavours.

This new arrangement of influencing factors revealed the significant role of affective experiences in engaging students in the current study in Music education, inspiring a large portion of their initial elective choices in Year 9. While apparent in the original model within the variable of ‘Intrinsic Value’, and discussed as part of the affective experience associated (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), the increased significance that enjoyment and emotional connection has with the study of Music has been demonstrated by participants in this study. Participants discussed the relationship between affect and interest in developing a value for Music, which remained an intrinsic component of their decision-making process. In this study, participants expressed their enjoyment, and the affective experiences they had with Music as a variable independent of their interest, with all students involved displaying some level of enthusiasm towards their involvement.



The rearrangement of factors from Eccles' (1983) original GMAC based on the data from this study also suggests that 'socialisers' as a group of external influencers needed to be re-thought, as they each had a different influence on students' engagement with Music education. In this study, participants discussed parental viewpoints on career pathways, subject choices and behaviour at school, with most highlighting a supportive relationship in which they were encouraged to "follow what they loved" but "be good at the same time". Data from this study also suggests that parents were identified as the providers of early exposure and extra-curricular experiences, with this directly relating to perceptions of costs associated with involvement. This was in contrast to teachers, who were perceived mainly as influencing the willingness for students to engage with lessons. Similarly, participants in this study explicitly stated that their friends had no influence on the subjects they chose to follow, preferring instead to pursue subjects with a level of personal interest, enjoyment or purpose. Instead, peers affected their perception of the classroom climate, and the way individuals in this study perceived the learning space as one they could safely engage with and perform in. For this reason within this study, parents were grouped with cultural milieu factors as their effect did not directly impact engagement in the classroom. Teachers and peers could be seen as a group of influencers within the participants in this study had towards Music.

In contrast with Eccles' (1983) original GMAC framework, the current study proposes a shift from understanding how students approach tasks from their perception of challenge, rather than difficulty associated with the task. This is because participants expressed a spectrum of difficulties which were unique to the tasks presented, rather than universally applied to the subject of Music. Participants such as Holly expressed quite emphatically that challenge is required to maintain interest, and that just because something is difficult does not necessarily negate further involvement. This also has important implications for how teachers support students to view the difficulties they might face as challenges, which provide a structure and reason to overcome the task. For this reason, the variable related to an individuals' perception of 'difficulty' has been reworded to include the perception of challenge.

A missing component of this study was the relationship between the identified factors with achievement behaviours of performance, or specific indicators of success. In Eccles' (1983) original GMAC framework, performance data was gathered in the form of test-scores, or final

grades to compare choice and persistence results with an individual's overall performance in that subject (Eccles, 1983). Performance in Music, however, can have a very different definition. Commonly, musical performance is referred to as the subjective, aesthetic judgement of an individual's instrumental or vocal ability to entertain. Achievement grades in Music as a subject can therefore be difficult to determine and compare between students, given the non-objective nature of related testing. There was limited data available on the aural ability of participants, with the subjective performances of students recorded in the form of a marking rubric with comments aligned to different grades. For this reason, data related to the performance of students beyond their perceptions or interpretations of these grades was not collected. Previous studies have also questioned the significance of performance or achievement grades in Music, and the effect on the overall motivation of students (Joseph, 2015; Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019; Parkes & Daniel, 2013; Russell-Bowie, 2009). These suggest that teachers focus on subjective advancements of skill, and encouraging 'small wins' to inspire those just beginning their Music education journeys.

### **7.2.1 Implications for Educators.**

This study also introduces implications for educators in applying these new extensions to Eccles' (1983) GMAC framework to the student choice of Music education. Importantly, the individual perception of the learning environment proved a key factor in influencing affective experiences and interest shown in the classroom. This brings attention to the impact that teachers and peers can have on the individual experience of Music, suggesting that the provision of a safe, inclusive, supportive space to experiment with musical knowledge is the most conducive to encouraging future involvement. While participants in this study did not connect their choice of Music specifically to the teacher or the peers in the classroom, they explained how these variables created the environment and atmosphere in which to learn and engage. Results of this study suggest that the more non-threatening and inviting the Music learning space seemed, the more positive the impacts on overall individual factors influencing achievement behaviours of individuals. Furthermore, the teacher and peers in this study were perceived to support interest and emotional connections with music in the classroom that in turn encouraged continued choice and engagement.

Findings from this study also revealed the significant role of identifying values for a subject or task, specifically utility value and future relevance in encouraging persistence. By

conceptualising goals and related self-definitions, participants in this study built a picture of the relevancy Music had in the present moment and to their future aspirations. Findings suggested that if Music's related skills and knowledge were judged as irrelevant to current or future pursuits, participants would be less likely to choose and persist with the subject or task. For this reason, educators should appreciate the important role that understanding relevancy and application of skill can have in supporting ongoing engagement of students in Music education. By exploring how musical skills can specifically be used in life, as well as to the benefit of other skills, may begin to help students understand the links between their current actions and their future application.

### **7.3 Limitations of the Study**

There were some limitations identified within the current investigation that influence the analysis and interpretation of results. As this was a small-scale study, concerned with first-hand student experiences within the specific context of a NSW Australian public secondary school, broad generalisations from these findings are not possible. This study was also limited in the time available to collect data, presenting boundaries on the longitudinal data collection otherwise possible. This was due to site-access, ethics requirements and thesis submission timelines, so further discussion has not been offered beyond this. However, this section contains additional exploration of limitations specifically related to the application of the GMAC framework (Eccles, 1983) in terms of collecting data about the cultural milieu, performance and gender effects on the choice of Music as a subject.

While some participants discussed the influence of contextual factors, the cultural milieu was not as apparent from data in this study. Rather, participants discussed attributions, memories and sociohistorical information such as the number of siblings they had, the occupations of their parents and their home-life situations which related to their study of Music. In this study, these points were included in each participant's vignette as contextual information, while full investigations of their socio-economic status, gender-role or potential industry expectations of their career aspirations were not conducted. While these variables did not emerge as significant, this presents a limitation to the current study as the cultural milieu is theorised in the GMAC (Eccles, 1983) to influence task-specific values and goal-setting behaviours of individuals. To analyse the influence of these variables, data could be collected on the SES, parental influences and the stereotyped gender-roles associated with their future aspirations. This would help

develop a cultural milieu profile relevant to each participant and examine if any major effects or factors were missed. This could involve identifying the career aspirations of students, relevant industry expectations and the awareness of these to the student.

This study did not collect any performance or achievement-related data, which proved another limitation of the investigation. Due to the existence of a different definition in the musical literature surrounding 'performance', this study had to consider the significance of this factor within the study of Music education. Previous studies have suggested the difficulty in interpreting achievement within Music, as it is highly subjective and dependent on the culture and context it is being viewed (Joseph, 2015; Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2019; Parkes & Daniel, 2013; Russell-Bowie, 2009). For example, the measures of musical success for a secondary student performing in Australia will be different to one performing in China, based on different notation, stylistic techniques and tonal systems (Merriam, 1964). This is also coupled with the fact that empirical data on student success in Music is sporadically collected throughout the year, and usually is determined by subjective judgements or marking criteria, making it difficult to compare between participants. In not collecting grade-related data, this study was able to better align with the nature of qualitative research which focuses on detail and reasoning behind variables, rather than statistical measurements of achievement or generalisability. This is also similar to other discipline areas such as sport in which individuals determine success through attaining a 'personal best' rather than comparing their achievements with others. To accommodate for these differences, data could be collected from the individuals' academic/school reports to have a consistent mode of comparison for student achievement. To align with the current research structure, these comments/grades could be analysed qualitatively to gather an overall sense of the students' achievements in and outside of Music and form a picture of their academic performance.

Another limitation of this study concerns the analysis of data in terms of gender. Previous studies using Eccles' theory, including Eccles original study, have examined the effect of gender on choice using EVT variables to unpack reasoning and relationships between gender and other factors (Barnes et al., 2005; Dawson & O'Connor, 1991; de Boise, 2018; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; McPherson et al., 2015). In this study, gender was not used as a comparative variable, with the researcher instead analysing data to see if any effect would emerge. There was a relatively even distribution of genders within each studied class, with data

revealing no patterns in reasoning when organised by sex. Furthermore, this study involved male, female and a non-binary participant who was in the process of transitioning throughout the duration of the study. The sentiments expressed by participants towards their choice of and persistence in Music revealed greater consistencies between these gender groups than differences and confirmed the existence of similar influencing factors to those of the original theory. For this reason, it can be said that gender was not a contributing factor in this study and therefore not one of interest to note. However, as gender was a feature of the original theory and previous research, the lack of representation in this current study is a limitation.

#### **7.4 Future Research Opportunities**

As a result of the current study, a range of future opportunities for investigation have been identified that would further develop the knowledge basis surrounding Music education-related achievement behaviours. These relate to the limitations and expansions on Eccles' (1983) original GMAC theory as mentioned in the previous sections.

Future research could focus on the effects of a broader range of socio-historic factors on the student experience of Music education, to investigate how contextual influences impact the achievement behaviours of students. This could include comparing current career intentions with industry expectations to see how these align with what is being learnt from the curriculum in order to prepare them for such jobs. This would help provide insight into how peripheral contextual factors impact achievement behaviours related to choice and persistence of a task or subject.

Future studies could also investigate student enrolment intentions in sport or other creative arts subjects to see if the new arrangement of variables could explain the choices and persistence of students in other disciplines. Sport and Creative Arts subjects hold a special relationship in schools, as they both exist as activities for students to engage with both in and outside of the formal learning environment (Mitchell et al., 2015; Waters et al., 2014). Furthermore, physical and aesthetic sensitivities are required for life-long wellbeing and holistic development, adding to the significance of their exploration in school (Board of Studies, 2003, 2006; Miranda, 2013). Applying the newly arranged model to these contexts would provide further insight into the achievement behaviours and intentions to continue with these integral subjects.

While this study looked at choice-specific points of transition in high school, further research could investigate the transition to post-compulsory study pathways. This would provide insight into how individuals make choices regarding their participation and persistence with Music between secondary school settings and tertiary education settings. It would be interesting to include groups of individuals who chose to continue studying Music, those who do not, and those who are still involved as a leisure activity to compare how these three types of engagement are developed and continued in early adulthood (Rogenmoser et al., 2018). With Music participation now voluntary in adulthood and no longer ‘required’ by a school environment, further research could investigate whether the same three main factors exist and/or the ability of the predictive model to apply to these new learning pathways.

Further research should also be conducted into the structure and order of variables within Eccles’ (1983) original empirical model, with qualitative research required to flesh out the knowledge connected with each set of factors. This is particularly important as models of choice have been rarely applied to Creative Arts subjects which are garnering more interest in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning as we move towards integrated models of education. Further studies into the actual significance of gender-effect on motivational data also needs to be conducted as today’s societies and rhetoric moves away from notions of gender-roles and binaries. While these are still ingrained and show some effect, the prevalence of the LGBTIQ+ community and emergence in young adulthood needs to be considered, as future investigations which intend to compare males and females need to be rethought.

The importance of affective experiences and emotional connections highlighted in this study and others also requires further investigation, as previous studies suggest music’s therapeutic effect (Sachs et al., 2015). Studies into how this effect can translate into a classroom or school environment to provide support for students, and a way to explore aesthetic sensitivities, could add more understanding to this factor. As the experience of high school is described as particularly traumatic or exhausting for some individuals, involvement with music education which provides a therapeutic effect could be an interesting point of future investigation.

A final avenue for future investigation from this study is to extend the scale and scope to address current longitudinal limitations. It would have been interesting to continue the present study over a number of years, altering the design to include longitudinal data collection to view

the choice progression of students over time. This would enable researchers to view their current choices, and how these related to choices made in future and how these aligned with persistence predictions and realisation. However, student attendance made this difficult within the current study. Although the Year 8 class population remained relatively stable, the Year 9 subset had one student drop out in Term 2, and another three that would not regularly attend school. One participant, Holly also left school at the end of Year 9 to pursue other employment opportunities. The Year 11 class had similar population issues, with two students leaving school within the first two weeks of site attendance, and one being a member of the Life Skills courses so only attending 2 scheduled Music lessons per two-week timetable cycle. Another Year 11 class member dropped out mid-way through Term 2, leaving a consistent group of seven students (5 participants plus two extra students) in the Music classroom from week-to-week during the site visits. This organisation made it difficult to plan for longitudinal collection or re-interviewing of participants, as there was no guarantee that these students would be in attendance from week to week, let alone to the following year.

## **7.5 Final Notes**

This study was the first of its kind to apply Eccles' (1983) General Model of Academic Choice (GMAC) framework to a Creative Arts context, specifically to the choice of Music as a subject. This involved an in-depth analysis of three Music classes, and fourteen separate student cases within a specific NSW, Australian public secondary school. This focused on a Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 group of students experiencing key points of transition within the curriculum, adolescence and their Music engagement. Comprehensive vignettes were created for each participant, which highlighted their experience of Music and how this contributed to their achievement behaviours, a summary of which was provided in Chapter 4. The analysis of participant data identified three significant factors behind the student engagement with Music, connected with statements that defined their reason for involvement; Affect, or "I like/love Music"; Interest or "I want to do Music"; and Goals and Self-Definition, or "I need to do Music". These impacted the values and expectancies of individuals, and in-turn their intentions to choose and continue persisting with Music education.

The present study indicated the significance of affective experience and encouraging interest when fostering intrinsic value in a task or subject. This was directly influenced by the learning environment (including the teachers and peers involved), previous experiences and attributions

connected with Music study. These variables of affect and interest encouraged the initial choice to engage with Music education, and were the underlying reason for Year 9 elective uptake and their intrinsic drive to engage. As participants grew older and their career goals become more defined, the purpose and application of these skills and knowledge became more important in an individuals' reasoning process when determining the selection of subjects.

The study also highlighted the importance of acknowledging a purpose for engagement, related to either the self-definition in relation to the task or subject, or specific goals. These in turn influenced the persistence an individual had towards Music education, as they recognised a utility value for the skill or knowledge which determines their ongoing engagement and application of skills and knowledge in a particular subject area. While only a few participants in the study indicated a wish to pursue a Music-industry related career, there was a general consensus that Music was a desirable leisure activity to pursue with those in Year 11 either stating they would continue Music in tertiary education or as a hobby.



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## 9 Appendices

### APPENDIX A – Integrated Research Management Application (IRMA) Ethics Approval Certificate from the University of Wollongong

#### HREC Approval of Application 2017/562

Dear Ms Rogerson,

I am pleased to advise that the application detailed below has been **approved**.

Ethics Number: 2017/562  
Approval Date: 05/02/2018  
Expiry Date: 04/02/2019  
Project Title: Understanding the student choice of music education  
Researcher/s: Bennett Sue; Capaldo Steven; Rogerson Claire  
Documents Approved: Ethics Application  
Response to review 17/01/2018 & 25/01/2018  
Student Participant Consent Form v4 [25012018](#)  
Student Participant Information Sheet v4 [25012018](#)  
Teacher Participant Consent Form v4 [25012018](#)  
Teacher Participant Information Sheet v4 [25012018](#)  
Whole Class Consent Form v4 [25012018](#)  
Whole Class Information Sheet v4 [25012018](#)  
Document Collection Protocol v3 [17012018](#)  
Incentive Cost Breakdown v1 [20112017](#)  
Letter to Principal v2 [20112017](#)  
Observation Protocol v1 [20112017](#)  
Student Interview Protocol V2 [20112017](#)  
Teacher Interview Protocol v2 [20112017](#)

Sites:

Site	Principal Investigator for Site
	Ms Claire Rogerson

The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document. Compliance is monitored through progress reports; the HREC may also undertake physical monitoring of research.

Approval is granted for a twelve month period; extension of this approval will be considered on receipt of a progress report **prior to the expiry date**. Extension of approval requires:

- The submission of an annual progress report and a final report on completion of your project.
- Approval by the HREC of any proposed changes to the protocol or investigators.
- Immediate report of serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants.
- Immediate report of unforeseen events that might affect the continued acceptability of the project.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process or your ongoing approval please contact the Ethics Unit on [4221 3386](tel:42213386) or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au).

Yours sincerely,

*Emma Barkus*

Associate Professor Emma Barkus,  
Acting Chair, UOW & ISLHD Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee

## APPENDIX B – State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) Ethics Approval Certificate from the New South Wales Department of Education



Ms Claire Rogerson

DOC18/95305  
**SERAP 2017574**

Dear Ms Rogerson

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Understanding the student choice of music education*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.**

This approval will remain valid until 04-Feb-2019.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	WWCC	WWCC expires
Claire Rogerson	WWC0389920E	27-May-2019

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: [serap@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:serap@det.nsw.edu.au)  
You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sandi Simpkins".

Sandi Simpkins  
**Director, School Policy and Information Management**  
7 February 2018

**School Policy and Information Management**  
**NSW Department of Education**  
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300  
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: [serap@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:serap@det.nsw.edu.au)



## APPENDIX C – Whole Class Information Sheets and Consent Forms

### APPENDIX C.a. – Whole Class Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

Understanding the influencing factors on academic choice in  
music education

Claire Rogerson, Dr Steven Capaldo & Prof Sue Bennett

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to understand how Australian students like you make choices about music education. This includes what you think and feel about music and the sorts of activities you are involved in, formally (inside of school) and informally/non-formally (outside of school). Not much is known about the current Australian student experience of music, with the data we get from this study helping us understand why students choose or don't choose music as a subject to study.

### Method and Demand on Participants

Your class has been chosen because you currently take music as a subject at school, and will need to choose electives at the end of this year. To understand the experiences that you have inside of school and how these affect how you feel about music, we will be observing your regular, weekly music classes during Term 2 and 3, 2018. Claire will take notes, ask questions of you and your peers and collect examples of your work as necessary. These observations will take place as part of your normal music lessons in your regular classroom throughout Term 2 and 3.

### Possible Risks, Inconveniences & Discomforts

As the researcher will be sitting in on your music lessons, not participating unless to ask a question of you or to collect work samples at the end of the lesson, we do not foresee any risk to you in this situation. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time, removing any data that you have provided, up until the time the data has been analysed. Refusal to participate, or withdrawal of consent in this study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong, or the research team. All responses will be assigned pseudonyms, with non-identifiable responses being used in the final report and thesis write-up to preserve your confidentiality.

### Benefits of the Research

Music shares similar trends with subjects like maths, science, sport and languages, usually thought of as 'difficult', 'specialised' or 'competitive'. While we are beginning to understand the reasons behind these attitudes in other subjects, the factors affecting student choice of music is relatively unknown. Unlike other studies which usually focus on the views of teachers or parents, we want to find out your opinions and choices related to music. This will help us develop an understanding of why students choose to continue or discontinue music education.

### Ethics Review & Complaints

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UOW ethics officer on +61.2.4221.3350 or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au).

If you would like to take part in this project, please complete the attached consent form and return to Claire, along with collected consent forms from your students by the **11<sup>th</sup> of April 2018**. Thank you for your interest in this study

Claire Rogerson  
School of Education  
University of Wollongong  
Australia

[clairer@uow.edu.au](mailto:clairer@uow.edu.au)

Dr Steven Capaldo  
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## APPENDIX C.b – Whole Class Consent Form



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

### Understanding the student choice of music education

Claire Rogerson, Dr Steven Capaldo & Prof Sue Bennett

### CLASS CONSENT FORM

I have been given information about the study titled 'Understanding the student choice of music education' and discussed any questions I may have about the research project with Claire Rogerson ([clairer@uow.edu.au](mailto:clairer@uow.edu.au)), Dr Steven Capaldo ([scapaldo@uow.edu.au](mailto:scapaldo@uow.edu.au)) and Professor Sue Bennett ([sbennett@uow.edu.au](mailto:sbennett@uow.edu.au)).

I am agreeing to participate in observations of my regular, weekly music lessons during Terms 2 and 3| 2018, taking place as part of the normal school timetable. I understand that the researcher will be taking notes, document samples and asking questions as necessary during the class.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include giving time to be interviewed, allowing my comments and opinions to be used in the study, and allowing my personal music documents to be collected, and have had an opportunity to ask all investigators any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for a doctoral thesis publication and possible future journal articles and reports for the Department of Education, and give permission for it to be used in this manner.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to refuse to participate and free to withdraw from the research at any stage and my data will be removed from the dataset. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect any potential contact with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on +61.2.4221.3350 or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au).

By signing below, I am indicating my consent to participate in the study. I understand that as I am under 18 years of age, I require a parent or guardian to co-sign my consent form. I have included their details below, along with their signature.

#### Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian Co-signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name – please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name & Relationship to student)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Email/Daytime contact info)



## APPENDIX D – Individual Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms

### APPENDIX D.a – Individual Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

**Understanding the student choice of music education**

*Claire Rogerson, Dr Steven Capaldo & Prof Sue Bennett*

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

##### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study is to understand how Australian students like you make choices about music education. This includes what you think and feel about music and the sorts of activities you are involved in, formally (inside of school) and informally/non-formally (outside of school). Not much is known about the current Australian student experience of music, with the data we get from this study helping us understand why students choose or don't choose music as a subject.

##### **Method and Demand on Participants**

Your class has been chosen because you currently take music as a subject, and will need to choose electives at the end of this year. If you choose to be involved, we will ask you to participate in the following to help us understand the experiences that you have inside and outside of school that affect how you feel about music;

- *Two (approx.) 30minute interviews* (taking place in Term 2 and 3, 2018). These will take place during break times or free periods, in your music classroom and will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.
- *Whole class observations* weekly, regular music lessons during Terms 2 and 3, 2018. Claire will sit-in on these classes and take notes, ask questions and collect examples of your work as necessary.

We also want to know about your music likes, dislikes and listening habits outside of school, so are offering you a free Spotify Premium membership for the duration of the study. This social music sharing application allows you to listen to, download and share music and playlists with friends and family for free (see [www.spotify.com/au](http://www.spotify.com/au) for more info). You will be provided with login details for an account, paid for and managed by the research team, who will collect data about what you listen to and how often you listen by looking at the 'Friend Activity' section of the program.

##### **Possible Risks, Inconveniences & Discomforts**

The main inconvenience we foresee for your involvement is the development of journals and recordings in your own time. However, as the researcher will be sitting in on your music lessons, not participating unless to ask a question of you or to collect work samples at the end of the lesson, we do not foresee any risk to you in this situation. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time, removing any data that you have provided, up until the time the data has been analysed. Refusal to participate, or withdrawal of consent in this study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong, or the research team. All participants will be assigned pseudonyms, with non-identifiable responses being used in the final report and thesis write-up to preserve your confidentiality.

##### **Benefits of the Research**

Music shares similar trends with subjects like maths, science, sport and languages, usually thought of as 'difficult', 'specialised' or 'competitive'. While we are beginning to understand the reasons behind these attitudes in other subjects, the factors affecting student choice of music is relatively unknown. Unlike other studies which usually focus on the views of teachers or parents, we want to find out your opinions and choices related to music. This will help us develop an understanding of why students choose to continue or discontinue music education.

##### **Ethics Review & Complaints**

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UOW ethics officer on +61.2.4221.3350 or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au).

If you would like to be part of this project, please complete the attached consent form and return to your music teacher by (insert TBC date here). Thank you for your interest in this study

*Claire Rogerson*  
School of Education  
University of Wollongong  
Australia

[clairer@uow.edu.au](mailto:clairer@uow.edu.au)

*Dr Steven Capaldo*  
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## APPENDIX D.b – Individual Participant Consent Form



UNIVERSITY  
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AUSTRALIA

Understanding the student choice of music education  
Claire Rogerson, Dr Steven Capaldo & Prof Sue Bennett

### STUDENT PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have been given information about the study titled 'Understanding the student choice of music education' and discussed any questions I may have about the research project with Claire Rogerson ([clairer@uow.edu.au](mailto:clairer@uow.edu.au)), Dr Steven Capaldo ([scapaldo@uow.edu.au](mailto:scapaldo@uow.edu.au)) and Professor Sue Bennett ([sbennett@uow.edu.au](mailto:sbennett@uow.edu.au)).

I am agreeing to participate in (please tick boxes to show your agreement).

- ☐ Two (approx.) 30 minute interviews/conversations with the research team about my music experiences, opinions and attitudes, with two interviews taking place in Term 2, 2018 and the others in Term 3, 2018. I understand that they will be audio-recorded, conducted in my music classroom and organised during a time convenient for me.
- ☐ Assignment of login details for a Spotify Premium account (provided free for the duration of the study). I allow the researcher to access data including playlists and listening records to add to my music profile.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include giving time to be interviewed, allowing my comments and opinions to be used in the study, and allowing my personal music documents to be collected, and have had an opportunity to ask all investigators any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for a doctoral thesis publication and possible future journal articles and reports for the Department of Education, and give permission for it to be used in this manner.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to refuse to participate and free to withdraw from the research at any stage and my data will be removed from the dataset. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect any potential contact with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on +61.2.4221.3350 or email [rs-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rs-ethics@uow.edu.au).

By signing below, I am indicating my consent to participate in the study. I understand that as I am under 18 years of age, I require a parent or guardian to co-sign my consent form. I have included their details below, along with their signature.

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian Co-signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name – please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name & Relationship to student)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Email/Daytime contact info)

## APPENDIX E – Letter to the Principal



### LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Principal,

Thank you for expressing interest in our project '**Understanding the student choice of music education**'. Dr Steven Capaldo and Prof Sue Bennett will oversee my project as supervisors. Our proposed research plan has been granted ethics approval from the University of Wollongong and the NSW Department of Education and Communities, and we are very excited to start the project at your school.

Our aim is to investigate the academic choices students make regarding their music education, with sensitivity to the range of formal, informal and non-formal learning experiences that develop and influence their current engagement and attitudes towards music.

#### Method

We wish to observe the lessons of one Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 music class throughout Terms 1, 2 and 3 next year (2018). These year groups have been identified as the most significant stages of study due to their looming elective choices in Terms 3 & 4 (2018), and the importance of their experiences in the lead up. Within each class, between 3 and 6 students will be selected for closer study, and along with their common music teacher, will make up the participants for the research. These participants will also be asked to participate in two (approx.) 30minute interviews, taking place in Terms 2 and 3 (2018), which will investigate in greater detail student attributions, expectations, goals and self-concepts related to music education. The student participants will also be offered a free Spotify Premium membership throughout the duration of their involvement to record their listening habits and preferences outside of school which will enrich our understanding of the students' music interests.

#### Consent

Their informed consent will be gained and made clear that participation in this study is voluntary, with refusal to participate (or withdrawal of consent) not affecting any relationship with the University of Wollongong or the research team. All personal and identifiable information (including names, and school) will remain confidential and only known by the research team. I will conduct the study by attending all music lessons of the identified Year 8 and Year 10 class, and will organise the first 2 interviews for the participants during Term 1, 2018. These will be arranged in breaks or free periods, and will take place in the music classroom, and will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. Participants will also be asked to develop journals and recordings of their non-formal and informal music experiences, including ensemble rehearsals, instrument tuition and social band practice. This data will be added to each individual participants' set to create an authentic picture of their experience with music, and the influences behind their academic choices in music.

We are very keen to work with you to communicate our activities and findings to all members of the school community. A report will be developed after the analysis has taken place, which will be provided to your school, the music teacher and the Department of Education as a record of your involvement with the study and the findings that emerged. I will be in contact shortly to set up a meeting and confirm that you are happy to go ahead with this project. At that point, we can develop the details further that best suit your staff, students and schedule.

We look forward to beginning a research collaboration with you and your school.

Best Regards,

Claire Rogerson  
PhD Candidate  
[clairer@uow.edu.au](mailto:clairer@uow.edu.au)

Dr Steven Capaldo  
+61.2.4221.4616  
[scapaldo@uow.edu.au](mailto:scapaldo@uow.edu.au)

Prof Sue Bennett  
+61.2.4221.5738  
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## APPENDIX F – Teacher Information Sheet and Consent Form

### APPENDIX F.a – Teacher Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

#### Understanding the student choice of music education

*Claire Rogerson, Dr Steven Capaldo & Prof Sue Bennett*

### TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

#### Purpose of the Research

Our aim is to investigate the academic choices students make regarding their music education, with sensitivity to the range of formal, informal and non-formal learning experiences that develop and influence their current engagement and attitudes towards music.

#### Method and Demand on Participants

You have been identified as the common music teacher for the Year 8 and Year 10 class chosen, who will both be required to choose electives at the end of 2018, affecting the continuing music engagement of students. We are interested in your views, opinions and attitudes of your students' involvement, as well as your own choices regarding your journey as a music professional. To do so, we will ask you to participate in;

- ☐ Two (approx.) 30minute interviews (taking place in Terms 2 and 3, 2018), audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis. These will be arranged with the researcher according to your schedule and convenience, and will be conducted on school grounds in your music classroom.
- ☐ Whole class observations of your regular, weekly music lessons (per year group, totalling 20 observations). The researcher will sit in on these lessons and take notes, ask questions and collect work samples as necessary. These will take place as part of your normal music classes for Term 2 and Term 3, 2018.

#### Possible Risks, Inconveniences & Discomforts

As the researcher will be sitting in on your music lessons, not participating unless to ask a question of you or to collect work samples at the end of the lesson, we do not foresee any risk to you in this situation. In addition, we will arrange interview times according to breaks in your timetable to manage your time effectively. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time, removing any data that you have provided, up until the time the data has been analysed. Refusal to participate, or withdrawal of consent in this study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong, or the research team. All participants will be assigned pseudonyms, with non-identifiable responses being used in the final report and thesis write-up to preserve your confidentiality.

#### Benefits of the Research

Music shares similar trends with subjects like maths, science, sport and languages, usually thought of as 'difficult', 'specialised' or 'competitive'. While we are beginning to understand the reasons behind these attitudes in other subjects, the factors affecting student choice of music is relatively unknown. Unlike other studies which usually focus on the views of teachers or parents, we aim to discover the student experience of music, and the factors that influence their continuing engagement. This will help us develop an understanding of why students choose to continue or discontinue music education.

#### Ethics Review & Complaints

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UOW ethics officer on +61.2.4221.3350 or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au).

Thank you for your interest in this study

*Claire Rogerson*  
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## APPENDIX F.b – Teacher Consent Form



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

### Understanding the student choice of music education

Claire Rogerson, Dr Steven Capaldo & Prof Sue Bennett

## TEACHER PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have been given information about the study titled 'Understanding the student choice of music education' and discussed any questions I may have about the research project with Claire Rogerson ([clairer@uow.edu.au](mailto:clairer@uow.edu.au)), Dr Steven Capaldo ([scapaldo@uow.edu.au](mailto:scapaldo@uow.edu.au)) and Professor Sue Bennett ([sbennett@uow.edu.au](mailto:sbennett@uow.edu.au)).

I am agreeing to participate in (please tick boxes to show your agreement);

- ☐ Observations of my regular, weekly music lessons during Terms 2 and 3, 2018 for both the nominated Year 8, 9 and Year 11 classes (totalling 20 observations). I understand that the researcher will be taking notes, document samples and asking questions as necessary during the class.
- ☐ Two (approx.) 30 minute interviews/conversations with the research team about my music experiences, opinions and attitudes, taking place in Term 2 and 3, 2018. I understand that they will be audio-recorded, conducted in my music classroom and organised at a time of my convenience.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include giving time to be interviewed, allowing my comments and opinions to be used in the study, and allowing my personal music documents to be collected, and have had an opportunity to ask all investigators any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for a doctoral thesis publication and possible future journal articles and reports for the Department of Education, and give permission for it to be used in this manner.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to refuse to participate and free to withdraw from the research at any stage and my data will be removed from the dataset. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect any potential contact with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on +61.2.4221.3350 or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au).

By signing below, I am indicating my consent to participate in the study. I understand that as I am under 18 years of age, I require a parent or guardian to co-sign my consent form. I have included their details below, along with their signature.

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Teacher Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name – please print)

## APPENDIX G – Semi-Structured Interview Protocols

### APPENDIX G.a – Student Semi-Structured Interview Protocol



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#### STUDENT SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTION PROTOCOL

All participants will be asked the same set of open-ended questions, with each question focusing on 1 of 4 main themes identified in literature and the General Model of Academic Choice (see key below). Main questions have been provided along with some prompts to further delve into the students' response. Please note the order of the questions is a starting point for the interview, while the natural flow of the participant's conversation should guide the prompts offered. For this reason, the order may vary between participants, but all participants will be asked the same questions throughout their interview periods.

All interviews will be audio-recorded, then transcribed for use in data analysis and the creation of case descriptions for each participant. Interviews will be transcribed to allow the researcher and participant to converse more easily during the process, with notetaking, transcription and analysis taking place afterwards. If extra questions were added during discussion on-top of those outlined in this protocol, they will be included in the final transcript of the interview.

**Key:** *PoE* (Perceptions of socialisers' Expectations and attitudes), *IA* (Interpretations of past experiences and attributions), *GSD* (Goals and Self-Definition), *SCD* (Self-Concept and perception of Difficulty)

#### Semi-Structured Interview Question Order Guide

1. What makes someone a good musician/musical? What makes someone not good at music/not musical? (SCD)
2. How do you see yourself as a music student? (IA/SCD)
3. Describe how music is important in your life. Is it important? Is it irrelevant? (GSD)
4. What do you think of music as a subject? As an elective? As a pastime? As a career-option? (PoE)
5. Do you consider yourself a musical person/a musician? Why/why not? (GSD)
6. Tell me about your musical involvement outside of school – Do you play an instrument? Play in an ensemble? Listen to music at home? (IA)
7. Why did you choose music as a subject? (GSD)
8. Why do you want to be a music student? (Or why not?) (GSD)
9. Do you think it's important to do well in music? Why/why not? (GSD/SCD)
10. What are your goals for music this year? (GSD)
11. What do your parents think of music as a subject? As a pastime? As a career-option? As an elective? (PoE)
12. Do you think they have any expectations of you as a music student? Why/Why not? (PoE)
13. What does your current music teacher think of you as a student? Musically and as a general student? (PoE)
14. Describe some music teachers that you have had in your life. (PoE)
15. Have you felt any of them expected too much or too little of you? Why/Why not? (PoE)
16. Describe one of your music lessons in primary school. (IA)
17. Tell me about the activities you do in music classes. Do you find these difficult? Easy? Why/why not? (SCD)
18. Do you find music difficult? Why/why not? (SCD)
19. Do you think you are good at music? Why/why not? (IA/GSD/SCD)
20. What makes music hard or easy for someone? (SCD)
21. What have your experiences been like with music in the past? (IA)
22. Describe your favourite music memory. (IA)
23. Describe your least favourite music memory. (IA)
24. How do you see music (skills and knowledge) helping with your future goals? Will it help? Why/why not? (GSD)
25. What do you see yourself doing after school? Do you see yourself as a musician/musical professional? Why/why not? (GSD)
26. Will you take music for an elective next year? Why/why not? (GSD)
27. Yr 8-Will any of your friends also take music next year? Why/why not? (PoE)
28. Yr 8-What would your friends think of you if you took music as a subject next year in Year 9? (PoE)
29. Yr 9/11-Do any of your friends take music? Why/why not? (PoE)
30. Yr 9/11-What do they think of you taking music as a subject? (PoE)

## APPENDIX G.b – Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Protocol



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### TEACHER SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTION PROTOCOL

The teacher will be asked a similar set of open-ended questions to the student participants, with each question focusing on 1 of 4 main themes identified in literature and the General Model of Academic Choice (see key below). Main questions have been provided along with some prompts to further delve into the teacher's response. Please note the order of the questions is a starting point for the interview, while the natural flow of the participant's conversation should guide the prompts offered. For this reason, the order may vary between participants, but all participants will be asked the same questions throughout their interview periods.

All interviews will be audio-recorded, then transcribed for use in data analysis and the creation of case descriptions for each participant. Interviews will be transcribed to allow the researcher and participant to converse more easily during the process, with notetaking, transcription and analysis taking place afterwards. If extra questions were added during discussion on-top of those outlined in this protocol, they will be included in the final transcript of the interview.

**Key:** *PoE* (Perceptions of socialisers' Expectations and attitudes), *IA* (Interpretations of past experiences and attributions, *GSD* (Goals and Self-Definition), *SCD* (Self-Concept and perception of Difficulty)

#### **Semi-Structured Interview Question Order Guide**

1. What makes someone a good musician/musical? What makes someone not good at music/not musical? (SCD)
2. What makes music hard or easy for someone? (SCD)
3. Do you find music difficult? Why/why not? (SCD)
4. Do you think you are good at music? Why/why not? (IA/SCD)
5. Do you think it's important to do well in music? Why/why not? (GSD/SCD)
6. Do you consider yourself a musical person/a musician? Why/why not? (GSD)
7. How do you see yourself as a music student? (IA/SCD)
8. Why did you choose music as a subject at school? (GSD)
9. What have your experiences been like with music in the past? (IA)
10. Describe your favourite music memory. (IA)
11. Describe one of your music lessons in primary school. (IA)
12. Describe your least favourite music memory. (IA)
13. How is music part of your everyday life currently? Was this ever drastically different? Why? (GSD)
14. Tell me about your musical involvement outside of school – Do you play an instrument? Play in an ensemble? Listen to music at home? (IA)
15. Describe your journey to becoming a music teacher. (IA)
16. Did you always want to become a music teacher? Why/why not? (GSD)
17. What did your teachers/parents/friends think of you becoming a music teacher? How did this influence you? (PoE)
18. How would you describe your teaching style? (PoE)
19. Tell me about the activities you design for your class. Do you find these difficult? Easy? Why/why not? (SCD)
20. How do you communicate with your students? (PoE)
21. What do you expect of your students in your classroom? (PoE)
22. How do you support students within your classroom/ensemble commitments? (PoE)
23. How do you make music education relevant/important for your students? (GSD)
24. Describe your musical goals for this year for both yourself and your students. What do you want them to achieve/know/understand? (GSD)

## APPENDIX H – Observation Protocol



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### OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observations of each music lesson of the selected Year 8, Year 9 and Year 11 music classes will be conducted according to the prescribed school timetable and held in the normal music classroom. The researcher will attend each lesson, and collect notes according to the structure below. Anecdotal recordings and work samples will also be collected as necessary, and attached to the notes from the observation period.

<b>Observer/Researcher Name:</b>	<b>Time &amp; Duration of Lesson:</b>
<b>Lesson Topic &amp; Main Activities:</b>	<b>Number of Students:</b>
	<b>Student Participants Present:</b>
	<b>Students withdrawing/absent:</b>
<b>Descriptive Notes</b> (inc. activity sequence and description, quotes, physical layout, verbal/non-verbal communication, resources and changes)	<b>Reflective Notes</b> (inc. interpretations, evaluations, non-verbal meaning, proceeding/subsequent events of influence)



## APPENDIX I – NVIVO Case Classifications and Descriptions Document

Numerical Code	Attribute and associated values	Descriptor
<b>1</b>	<b>Year</b>	<i>Classification of students via their assigned year level (dependent on age and stage of school development)</i>
<b>1.1</b>	Year 8	<i>Students are in their second year of high school, learning at a Stage 4 level and are usually 13 or 14 years old.</i>
<b>1.2</b>	Year 9	<i>Students are in their third year of high school, learning at an early Stage 5 level and are usually 14 or 15 years old. These students will have chosen music as an elective half-way through year 8, and will stay in the course throughout years 9 and 10.</i>
<b>1.3</b>	Year 11	<i>Students are in their fifth year of high school, learning at an early Stage 6 level and are usually 16 or 17 years old.</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<i>Classification of students via their identifying gender, determining use of appropriate pronouns</i>
<b>2.1</b>	Female	<i>Students identifying as female, and preferring female pronouns (she/her)</i>
<b>2.2</b>	Non-Binary	<i>Students identifying as neither female or male, known more commonly as ‘non-binary’ or ‘gender non-conforming’. These students prefer the use of gender neutral pronouns (they/them) or calling them simply by name.</i>
<b>2.3</b>	Male	<i>Students identifying as male, and preferring male pronouns (he/him)</i>
<b>3</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<i>Classification of students via their anticipated future involvement with music as a subject at school</i>
<b>3.1</b>	Continuing (by choice)	<i>Students foresee continuing to take music as a subject at school, either as an elective or as part of their final HSC subject choices</i>
<b>3.2</b>	Continuing (by necessity)	<i>Students must continue their music involvement, due to their choice of music as a Year 9 elective. The Stage 5 curriculum (@FHS) requires</i>

		<i>students to participate in both Year 9 and Year 10 music classes in order to fulfil course outcomes.</i>
<b>3.3</b>	Discontinuing	<i>Students have chosen to discontinue their music involvement, and have either chosen a different set of electives that do not include music, or have ‘dropped’ music as a subject for their final Year 12 HSC subject choices.</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>Siblings</b>	<i>Classification of students via the number of siblings in their families</i>
<b>4.1</b>	None	<i>Students do not have any siblings/are an only child.</i>
<b>4.2</b>	1-2	<i>Students have one or two siblings (apart from themselves) in their family</i>
<b>4.3</b>	3+	<i>Students have three or more siblings (apart from themselves) in their family</i>
<b>5</b>	<b>Musical Upbringing</b>	<i>Classification of students via their early music experiences, both at home/outside of school and in primary school.</i>
<b>5.1</b>	Early home & school experiences	<i>Students have had early musical experiences in the home (provided by parents), along with primary school music memories</i>
<b>5.2</b>	Only early school experiences	<i>Students do not recall particularly musical childhoods or home-lives, but have memories of primary school music experiences.</i>
<b>5.3</b>	No memory of early experiences	<i>Students do not recall any early music experiences, either from their home-lives or from primary school.</i>
<b>6</b>	<b>Future Career Applicability</b>	<i>Classification of students via their future career choices, and whether or not music has relevance to this career</i>
<b>6.1</b>	Music-specific career	<i>Students have chosen a music-specific career (such as musician, entertainer, stage-work or composer), and therefore the subject of ‘music’ has direct relevance</i>
<b>6.2</b>	Indirect-hobby influence	<i>Students have chosen a career that is not directly music related, however have indicated their desire to continue involvement as a hobby or skill. They have also expressed how this will help to support their job, even if not specifically/obviously relevant.</i>

<b>6.3</b>	No relevance	<i>Students have chosen a career that is not directly related to music, and have no desire to continue music as a hobby or related skill.</i>
<b>6.4</b>	Unsure of future career	<i>Students are not yet sure what career path they would like to take, and therefore cannot determine whether music is relevant.</i>
<b>7</b>	<b>Musical Self-Concept</b>	<i>Classification of students via their self-beliefs about their own capability and skills in music</i>
<b>7.1</b>	Good	<i>Students identified themselves as capable students of music, and referred to this level of skill as ‘above average’</i>
<b>7.2</b>	Average	<i>Students identified themselves as neither good, nor bad at music; meeting an average standard for their perception of the class.</i>
<b>8</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<i>Classification of students via their choice of instrument to learn and play both in the classroom, and outside of school</i>
<b>8.1</b>	Voice	<i>Students identified themselves as vocalists, with a variety of different vocal ranges.</i>
<b>8.2</b>	Guitar	<i>Students identified themselves as guitarists, with a range of acoustic, bass, ukulele and electric players</i>
<b>8.3</b>	Piano/Keyboard	<i>Students identified themselves as keyboard-players, or pianists (depending on the particular instrument being played in the classroom)</i>

## APPENDIX J – NVIVO Interview Codes and Descriptions Document

No.	Node Title	Description	GMAC Code	
1.1	‘Good’ Perception	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>What makes someone a good musician/musical/good at music?</i> ’. Answers show a personal perception of what they believe constitutes success or achievement in music	SCD	
1.2	‘Not Good’ Perception	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>What makes someone not good at music/bad at music/a poor musician/not musical?</i> ’. Answers show a personal perception of what someone who is unsuccessful in music as a subject, or how they identify poor achievers.	SCD	
2.1	Self-Concept & Perception	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>How do you see yourself as a music student?</i> ’. Answers explain personal beliefs of how students see themselves as a student in the music classroom, how they learn and may link to previous music experiences	SCD	IA
3.1	Importance of Music	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Describe how music is important in your life. Is it important? Is it irrelevant?</i> ’. Answers demonstrate the extent to which students find music important, and their explanations of how this manifests in their lives.	GSD	
4.1	Perception of Music (subject)	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>What do you think of music as a subject? As an elective? As a pastime? As a career-option?</i> ’. Answers show how students perceive music as a subject at school, and provides insight into the personal reasoning behind these views.	PoE	
5.1	Perception of Musicality	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Do you consider yourself a musical person/a musician? Why/why not?</i> ’. Answers explain whether or not students perceive themselves as musical and the personal reasoning behind such definition	GSD	
6.1	Out-of-school Music Involvement	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Tell me about your musical involvement outside of school – do you play an instrument? Play in an ensemble? Listen to music at home?</i> ’. Answers show the sorts of musical activities students engage with formally, informally and non-formally outside of the classroom and school environment	IA	
7.1	Choice of Music	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Why did you choose music as a subject?</i> ’. Answers show student reasoning behind their decisions to take music as an elective or subject.	GSD	

8.1	Desire to Participate	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Why do you want to be a music student?</i> ’. Answers provide personal insight into why students want to continue with their music education.	GSD	
8.2	Desire to Not Participate	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Why do you not want to be a music student?</i> ’. This question was posed to those students who indicated throughout their interviews that they had a lack of or decreasing interest in continuing their music involvement. Answers explain their personal reasoning behind why they no longer want to persist with music education.	GSD	
9.1	Perception of Minimum Standards	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Do you think it’s important to do well in music? Why/why not?</i> ’. Answers demonstrate how students perceive minimum standards of achievement in relation to music, and links to personal importance.	GSD	SCD
10.1	Goals	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>What are your goals for music this year?</i> ’. Answers show a range of personal, academic and skill-related goals set by students to achieve during the 2018 academic school year.	GSD	
11.1	Parental Opinions	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>What do your parents think of music as a subject? As a pastime? As a career-option? As an elective?</i> ’. Answers show how students interpret the opinions of parents in relation to their involvement in music.	PoE	
11.2	Parent Interests - Mother	Student explanations of what their mother (or primary female caregiver) is interested in, her field of work and history with music involvement.	POI	
11.3	Parent Interests - Father	Student explanations of what their father (or primary male caregiver) is interested in, his field of work and history with music involvement	POI	
11.4	Sibling Interests & Info	Student descriptions of their siblings, their relationship with them and their interests, hobbies and occupations.	POI	
12.1	Parental Expectations	Student answers to the question ‘ <i>Do you think [your parents] have any expectations of you as a music student? Why/Why not?</i> ’. Answers show how students perceived their parents’ expectations of their involvement and achievement in music, other subjects/overall academic success and the reasoning behind why these expectations are held (or not).	PoE	

<b>13.1</b>	Teacher perceptions	Student answers to the question <i>‘What does your current music teacher think of you as a student? Musically and as a general student?’</i> . Answers include opinions of how students think their teacher perceives their participation, involvement, achievement, attitude and general behaviour in the classroom, and their skills in music.	<b>PoE</b>
<b>14.1</b>	Previous Music Teachers	Student answers to the prompt <i>‘Describe some music teachers that you have had in your life’</i> . Answers include student descriptions and recounts of previous experiences with music teachers (both positive and negative).	<b>PoE</b>
<b>15.1</b>	Teacher Expectations	Student answers to the question <i>‘Have you felt any [music teachers] expected too much or too little of you? Why/why not?’</i> . Answers show the expectations students feel are placed on them within the music classroom by their current or previous teachers.	<b>PoE</b>
<b>15.2</b>	General Expectations	Student answers to the question <i>‘Have you felt any [teachers] expected too much or too little of you in general? Why/why not?’</i> . Answers show the expectations students feel are placed on them from teachers to achieve or succeed in general academics.	<b>PoE</b>
<b>15.3</b>	Teacher opinions	Student answers regarding their opinions on current and other teachers of music, or other subjects, that influence their general attitude towards school and participation.	<b>PoE</b>
<b>16.1</b>	Primary School Memories	Student answers to the prompt <i>‘Describe one of your music lessons from primary school’</i> . Answers include student recounts and memories from primary school music experiences (or lack thereof)	<b>IA</b>
<b>16.2</b>	Early High School Memories	Student answers regarding their memories of music from early high school years (year 7 and/or 8). This includes lessons, teachers, activities, knowledge, skills and/or instrument playing from the Stage 4 (compulsory) music curriculum in secondary school.	<b>IA</b>
<b>17.1</b>	Musical Activities	Student answers to the prompt <i>‘Tell me about the activities you do in music classes. Do you find these difficult/easy? Why/why not?’</i> . Answers include activities and/or exercises from in-school music experiences, and students’ perceptions of their abilities and success with these.	<b>SCD</b>
<b>17.2</b>	Practical Music interests	Student descriptions of their interest in the ‘practical’ side (playing, practicing and the ‘hands-on’ activities) of music. This is most often compared with the aural or ‘theory’	<b>SCD</b>

		component of music learning in the classroom, and student reasoning is offered for the preference of one over the other.			
<b>18.1</b>	Perceived difficulty	Student answers to the question ' <i>Do you find music difficult? Why/why not?</i> '. Answers show personal perceptions of difficulty and the types of skills, activities and knowledge which provide challenges for students	SCD		
<b>19.1</b>	Self-Definition	Student answers to the question ' <i>Do you think you are good at music? Why/why not?</i> '. Answers show student reasoning behind their self-definition, and how they see their achievement and standing within the music classroom.	GSD	IA	SCD
<b>19.2</b>	Personal Educational History & Background	Student explanations of their approach to other subjects, and their educational history at school. This includes anecdotes of positive and negative experiences that have contributed to how students learn, and their opinions on how these influence their current attitudes.	IA		
<b>19.3</b>	Personal Identity	Student answers to the question ' <i>If there was one thing I had to know to understand you better as a person, what would it be?</i> '. Answers include self-definitions, identifying factors and interests.	POI		
<b>20.1</b>	Ease of Music Knowledge & Participation	Student answers to the question ' <i>What makes music hard or easy for someone? Do you find it hard or easy?</i> '. Answers describe the distinction between music being 'hard' or 'easy', and how the student would define their own experiences	SCD		
<b>21.1</b>	Past Musical Experiences	Student answers to the question ' <i>What have your experiences been like with music in the past?</i> '. Answers include recounts of previous activities/lessons, teachers and experiences associated with music education and involvement	IA		
<b>22.1</b>	Best Music-Related Memory	Student answers to the prompt ' <i>Describe your favourite music memory</i> '. Answers include the most memorable experiences and stories of students with some relationship to music involvement.	IA		
<b>23.1</b>	Least Favourite or Negative Music Memory	Student answers to the prompt ' <i>Describe your least favourite music memory</i> '. Answers include students' most hated, negative and/or least enjoyable experiences related to music participation.	IA		

<b>24.1</b>	Music's Future Relevance	Student answers to the question ' <i>How do you see music (skills and knowledge) helping with your future goals? Will it help? Why/why not?</i> '. Answers show whether or not students view music as supporting their future career, academic and life goals.	<b>GSD</b>
<b>25.1</b>	Future Career Thoughts	Student answers to the question ' <i>What do you see yourself doing after school?</i> '. Answers show the range of career pathways students have either mused over or decided to take up upon leaving school.	<b>GSD</b>
<b>25.2</b>	Music-Related Profession	Student answers to the question ' <i>Do you see yourself as a musician/musical professional? Why/why not?</i> '. Answers explain whether or not a student anticipates taking up a music-related career, and the reasoning behind this occupational choice.	<b>GSD</b>
<b>25.3</b>	Future Participation in Music (hobby)	Student answers explaining how music (in some form of a hobby) will be included in their future career pathways, while not being specifically thought of as a traditional 'musical profession'.	<b>GSD</b>
<b>26.1</b>	Future Participation in Music (subject)	Student answers to the question ' <i>Will you take music for an elective next year? Why/why not?</i> '. Answers show student reasoning behind their continuing or ceased participation in music as a subject at school.	<b>GSD</b>
<b>26.2</b>	Electives	Student explanation of other electives/subjects being undertaken apart from music, and why these were chosen. For year 8 students, this will indicate what they hope to choose. Year 9 students explain the other 2 electives they have chosen apart from music, and Year 11 students describe their subjects chosen for Stage 6.	<b>POI</b>
<b>26.3</b>	Favourite Subject	Student answers show their favourite subject currently being studied and reasoning for this choice.	<b>POI</b>
<b>26.4</b>	Least Favourite Subject	Student answers show their least favourite subject currently being studied and reasoning behind this perception.	<b>POI</b>
<b>27.1</b>	Friends Taking Music	Student answers to the question ' <i>Will/Do any of your friends take music? Why/why not?</i> '. Answers show whether or not the students' friends/close peers participate in music too, and why this may be.	<b>PoE</b>
<b>27.2</b>	Perception of Others' Involvement	Student explanations of why they think other students may participate, or show lack of enthusiasm towards music education.	<b>PoE</b>



<b>28.1</b>	Peer's Perception of Music Involvement	Student answers to the question ' <i>What would/do your friends think of you if you took music as a subject?</i> '. Answers show how students think their friends perceive them if/because they took music as an elective and the reasoning for this belief.	<b>PoE</b>
<b>29.1</b>	Desire for Teacher Understanding	Student answers to the question ' <i>If there was one thing you wish teachers understood about being a student in the classroom, what would it be?</i> '. Answers show the changes that students would see as beneficial for their education and relationships with their teachers to get the most out of school learning.	<b>POI</b>
<b>30.1</b>	Significant Statements	Includes important, interesting and insightful statements from students about a variety of topics. These could be use later as integral quotes to support analysis and reasoning behind findings.	<b>POI</b>
<b>31.1</b>	Positive Music Enjoyment Factors	Student answers to the question ' <i>What do you like/enjoy about music? Why?</i> '. Answers include reasons students want to participate, as well as the variety of factors and activities that students enjoy about their music education.	<b>POI</b>
<b>31.2</b>	Negative Music Enjoyment Factors	Student answers to the question ' <i>What do you dislike about music? Why?</i> '. Answers include the variety of reasons that students dislike about participating in music, and/or the activities which are not enjoyable.	<b>POI</b>
<b>32.1</b>	Creative Fatigue Indicators	Student answers showing an exhaustion or decreasing interest in music, after a prolonged period of participation. Reasoning and anecdotes behind this growing disinterest in music are shown.	<b>IA</b>

**Key:**

<b>PoE</b>	<b>Perceptions of Socialisers' Attitudes and Expectations</b>
<b>IA</b>	Interpretations and Attributions of Past Events
<b>GSD</b>	Goals and Self-Definition
<b>SCD</b>	Self-Concept and perception of Difficulty
<b>POI</b>	Points Of Interest

## APPENDIX K – NVIVO Survey Codes and Descriptions Document

Question #	Node Title & Code	Description
SQ1 – What is your definition of music?	D.1 Simple Definitions	Student responses of less than 7 words, lacking sentence and grammar structure and mostly relating to sound or auditory factors. [7 RESPONSES]
	D.2 Complex-Related Definitions	Student responses of more than 7 words, using proper grammar and sentence structure and offering a considered response. Definitions share a common theme around the creation, arrangement and appreciation of sound. [10 RESPONSES]
	D.3 Complex-Unique Definitions	Student responses of more than 7 words, using proper grammar and sentence structure and offering a considered, unique response. Definitions are novel within the data set, and vary from those within and in other categories. [3 RESPONSES]
	D.4 Sound	Student definitions of music with mentions of ‘ <i>sound</i> ’ or ‘ <i>audio</i> ’. [12 RESPONSES]
	D.5 Art-form	Student definitions of music with mentions of it being an ‘ <i>art-form</i> ’, ‘ <i>self-expression of art</i> ’, ‘ <i>masterpiece or grand music</i> ’ or sounds arranged ‘ <i>to create an artwork</i> ’. [4 RESPONSES]
	D.6 Instruments	Student definitions of music with mentions of ‘ <i>instruments</i> ’ [5 RESPONSES]
	D.7 Combination	Student definitions of music with descriptions of ‘ <i>sounds put together</i> ’, adding elements to create a masterpiece, ‘ <i>instruments coming together</i> ’ or an ‘ <i>arrangement of sound</i> ’. [7 RESPONSES]
SQ2 (Yr 8)	8.1 Interest	Student indications of interest, in response to the question ‘Are you interested in music? Why/Why not?’.
	8.2 Emotion	Student responses connecting their interest in music with emotions (‘ <i>makes me feel happy and relaxed</i> ’ & ‘ <i>I can escape from anything</i> ’) and deep enjoyment (‘ <i>I love it</i> ’).
	8.3 Variety	Student responses connecting interest with variety, choice and idea exploration (‘ <i>you can explore all the different genres</i> ’).
S Q 2	I. I LIKE IT	Student choices linked with ‘liking’ music involvement. [12 RESPONSES]

	I.1 Playing	Student indicates they ‘like playing [music/instruments]’.
	I.2 Music	Student indicates they generally ‘like music’.
	I.3 Passion	Student describes a passion for music.
	P. PLAYING	Student choices linked with a want to ‘play music’. [7 RESPONSES]
	P.1 Instruments & Enjoyment	Student describes their enjoyment of ‘playing instruments’.
	P.2 Learning to play	Student attributes their choice to wanting to learn how to play an instrument.
	P.3 Familial tradition	Student describes their choice as part of a family tradition of playing an instrument.
	L. LEARNING	Student choices linked with wanting to learn more about music. [6 RESPONSES]
	L.1 Gain confidence & experience	Student attributes choice to gaining confidence and experience with music and their instrument.
	L.2 Development	Student describes taking music in order to ‘get better’ at it.
	L.3 Styles	Student describes choosing music to learn about different styles and genres.
	L.4 Develop aural skills	Student describes taking music in order to develop theory and aural skills.
	C. CREATIVE EXPRESSION	Student choices linked with the capacity for creative and personal expression through music. [3 RESPONSES]
	C.1 Self-definition & Identity	Student describes taking music because they felt capable, allowed for personal insights into the self or others, or because it was a part of themselves (‘music has always been a part of me’).
	F. FUTURE RELEVANCE	Student choice linked with future career and goal relevance. Also describes past influencing experiences. [1 RESPONSE]
SQ3 – Will you take	D. DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SUBJECTS	Student choice linked with music being different to other, more ‘academic’ subjects taken (‘ <i>diversify my school studies away from the more ‘academic’ side</i> ’). [1 RESPONSE]
	O. LIMITED OPTIONS	Student described disliking other/previous electives and taking music out of need or necessity.
	Y. YES	Students indicating ‘YES’ either via the checkbox, or affirmative language. [12 RESPONSES]
	Y.1 Future Relevance	Positive student indications, linking choice with future relevance and applicability of music.
	Y.2 Enjoyment & Interest	Positive student indications, linking choice with enjoying and/or liking their participation in music.

Y.3 Personal Identity	Positive student indications, linking choice with music forming part of their personal identity.
Y.4 Different from other subjects	Positive student indications, linking choice of music with it being different from other subjects taken.
Y.5 Learn more	Positive student indications, linking choice with wanting to learn more about music.
Y.6 Necessity	Positive student indications, linking choice with a need to participate in order to fulfill HSC and ATAR requirements.
N. NO	Students indicating 'NO' either via the checkbox, or negative language. [6 RESPONSES]
N.1 Future Relevance	Negative student indications, linking discontinuation with music no longer being relevant or necessary to future goals and aspirations.
N.2 Preference of other subjects	Negative student indications, linking discontinuation with favouring other subjects over music.
N.3 Anxiety & Stress	Negative student indications, linking discontinuation with anxiety and/or stress related to music and performing.
N.4 Dropping out	Negative student indications, linking discontinuation with the decision to drop out of school entirely.
N.5 Enjoyment	Despite a negative indication for continuing music, student describes enjoying elements of their current music participation.
U. UNSURE	Students checking neither 'YES' or 'NO' box, and indicating they had not yet decided. [2 RESPONSES]
U.1 Dependent on goals	Students describing the goals and needs that their future choice of music was dependent on.

## APPENDIX L – Qualitative Thematic Analysis Document

Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator	Quant. No.	Participants and relevant information
Teachers	Likability & Personality	Like the teacher	7	<b>Annie</b> – likes Mrs Maple, <b>Carly</b> – likes Mrs Maple, <b>Avery</b> – influential music teacher from primary school who now runs the music camp & thinks Mrs Maple is “amazing”, <b>Max</b> – likes Mrs Maple, <b>Liam</b> – respects Mrs Maple, <b>Grace</b> – liked her music teachers and Mrs Maple, <b>Isiah</b> – likes Mrs Maple,
		Diff. btwn teachers	5	<b>Jasmine</b> – noted differences between teachers in music and from other subjects, <b>Grace</b> – noted a difference between Mrs Maple (working with others and more organised) and Mr Mahogany (more practical focused), <b>Jenna</b> – previous lessons with inexperienced and unqualified teachers (new training highly influential on her skills) & Mr Mahogany could sense passion but couldn’t control class & Mrs Maple is more calm while getting the work completed, <b>Dean</b> – Mr Mahogany had no focus on aural skills and preferred practical lessons and lost control of class, <b>James</b> – general appreciation from Mrs Maple while Mr Mahogany focuses on those who are skilled already,
		Teaching style	5	<b>Annie</b> – likes teaching style, <b>Carly</b> – likes teaching style, <b>Holly</b> – prefers individual learning techniques which are applied in music, <b>Max</b> – influential guitar teachers who encouraged experimentation and exploration, <b>Jenna</b> – recently having lessons from a trained vocal coach which is greatly supporting her knowledge and development,
		Influence on choice	5	<b>Holly</b> – influence how she learns and whether she wants to come to school & influence attitude, <b>Max</b> – wouldn’t take music if it wasn’t taught by Mrs Maple, <b>Grace</b> – chooses subjects where she works well with the teacher, <b>Isiah</b> – dislikes timber because of teacher (not supportive), <b>Dean</b> – teacher with small influence on decision but more out of personal passion and interest,

		Diff. attitude for casuals	4	<b>Jasmine</b> – noted that the work set by casual teachers was not useful, <b>Alice</b> – casuals find it hard to control the class and are less knowledgeable about music, <b>Max</b> – showed a very different attitude and behaviour for casual teachers, <b>Liam</b> – shows different attitude and behaviour for casual teachers,
		Pref. of one teacher	3	<b>Holly</b> – prefers Mrs Maple, <b>Avery</b> – prefers Mrs Maple as classroom teacher (continuity of learning), <b>James</b> – prefers Mrs Maple (changed during member checking to Mr Mahogany),
	Environment & Management	Communication	6	<b>Carly</b> – noted good classroom management strategies and compared with ways other teachers communicated with students, <b>James</b> – feels like Mrs Maple shares her appreciation and attention evenly while Mr Mahogany pays attention to skilled players, <b>Liam</b> – ability of the teacher to communicate effects his engagement in the classroom, <b>Isiah</b> – doesn't feel like he is being taught by timber teacher, <b>Dean</b> – shared responsibility of learning success with teacher and student due to communication and personal effort, <b>Avery</b> – felt like his music camp/choir teacher was able to explain without being condescending which led him to like the teacher,
		Atmosphere	5	<b>Jasmine</b> – calm of Mrs Maple and yelling of Mr Mahogany, <b>Carly</b> – yelling of Mr Mahogany & Mrs Maple capable of controlling classroom, <b>Holly</b> – feels comfortable with Mrs Maple, <b>Grace</b> – noted the passion and encouragement offered by Mrs Maple, <b>Jenna</b> – noted Mrs Maple as more laid back & sees students as friends and equals,
		Organisation	4	<b>Carly</b> – Mrs Maple facilitates practical involvement, <b>Avery</b> – bad memories of history teacher who was underprepared and did not seem interested in teaching the class, <b>Grace</b> – felt Mrs Maple was more organised than Mr Mahogany, <b>Mira</b> – Mrs Maple sets high yet achievable expectations,
		Understanding	4	<b>Annie</b> – Mrs Maple helps support and develop the students' understanding, <b>Holly</b> – dislikes maths teacher as she lacks understanding and empathy for students & feels like Mrs Maple understands her, <b>Max</b> – feels like Mrs Maple

				is understanding & has personal relationship and interest in each student, <b>Avery</b> – felt like singing teacher was good cause she was able to help you understand without explicit explanation/condescending tone,
		Support	4	<b>Grace</b> – finds Mrs Maple supportive, <b>Jenna</b> – noted Mrs Maple has a close relationship with her and her family/sister through wellbeing role, <b>Mira</b> – finds Mrs Maple supportive, <b>Isiah</b> – dislikes timber teacher as he is not supportive,
		Control	3	<b>Carly</b> – management and control of classroom behaviour and students, <b>Holly</b> – teachers influence the behaviour and attitude of students involved, <b>Jenna</b> – noted Mr Mahogany couldn't control class (yelled and would defer to prac activities),
		Strictness	2	<b>Annie</b> – noted strictness of other classrooms but not music, <b>Jenna</b> – noted previous teacher was very strict,
		Fun	1	<b>Annie</b> – teacher makes it more fun,
	“Same page” (common understanding)	Individuals	5	<b>Mira</b> – each student is different and learns differently (more to each student than their school life), <b>Alice</b> – not everyone learns at the same level and rate as everyone else so it becomes hard for teachers to assess whether the whole class understands or not & feels like she can get left behind in some topics, <b>Holly</b> – each student as an individual that has different ways of understanding and learning that teachers have to communicate with (needs individual support), <b>James</b> – acknowledging that students are at different stages of their learning and despite having to teach the same curriculum teachers can differentiate to ensure that tasks meet the skills of students involved, <b>Max</b> – each student will have a different genre interest and involving those in tasks would help individualise and personalise the learning experience & wants to be understood as an individual in all classes/subjects,
		Preference of prac	5	<b>Dean</b> – musicology and aural not interesting and would prefer to prac in class, <b>Annie</b> – prefers the playing side of music over theory which more people like

				and would engage people (get bored otherwise), <b>Carly</b> – wants a variety of instrumental options, <b>Jasmine</b> – agreed that a variety of instrumental options would make music ‘better’, <b>Liam</b> – wants to spend time playing rather than learning about music (already has this knowledge),
		Influence of external factors on school work	4	<b>Isiah</b> – influence of social life and friends that are more fun than doing work after school (balance of work and home life), <b>Jenna</b> – students have mental issues and anxieties caused by pressures from homework and trying to balance out-of-school life which require students to stay up later/find time elsewhere to get tasks complete, <b>Mira</b> – more to a student than their school-life and the influence of jobs/social time/sports on ability to complete work in a timely and successful fashion, <b>Avery</b> – doesn’t feel like he has enough time out of school to complete homework when there are requirements from other subjects/activities,
		“kids will be kids”	2	<b>Annie</b> – desire to understand kids will be silly because they are kids, <b>Carly</b> – still children and want to try their best which requires a longer time or greater support than an older student/adult might with the same activity,
		Developing memory	1	<b>Grace</b> – wants teachers to understand that they won’t remember things from 5 years ago and need help to revise/remember,
	Summative & Descriptive Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affect engagement but not personal interest (Liam)</li> <li>- Enjoyment of the classroom/subject influenced by the teacher (Jasmine)</li> </ul>		
Peers	Social Atmosphere	Social friends in class	9	<b>Jasmine</b> – best friend Carly and plays piano with her during class and lunch times, <b>Max</b> – has social friends in class, <b>James</b> – has friends in the classroom, <b>Liam</b> – plays with friends in class who taught him how to play guitar, <b>Grace</b> – enjoys playing with friends in classroom, <b>Jenna</b> – few friends in class, <b>Isiah</b> – has some friends in the class, <b>Dean</b> – few friends in class and school, <b>Carly</b> – best friend Jasmine and plays during class together,



		Social memories of music	5	<b>Holly</b> – memories of friends and songs (being in the moment), <b>Alice</b> – remembers fondly listening to music with friends in the lounge room making their own concert, <b>Grace</b> – favourite memories come from playing with peers, <b>Jenna</b> – vivid social memories connected with music camp, <b>Avery</b> – favourite memories come from music camp and interacting with peers,
		Enjoys peer involvement	5	<b>Alice</b> – enjoys atmosphere of the classroom, <b>Avery</b> – feels like peers in the classroom want to be there, <b>Liam</b> – plays with friends in class, <b>Grace</b> – likes working with peers and encouraged by Mrs Maple, <b>Mira</b> – enjoys singing with girls in the class,
		Comfortable/Welcoming	4	<b>Holly</b> – feels comfortable in the classroom, <b>Alice</b> – safe and non-judgmental atmosphere, <b>Avery</b> – feels like the atmosphere is lighter because people want to be there and notices passion in the room, <b>Grace</b> – noted social atmosphere of classroom & gets along well with peers,
		Supportive	1	<b>Mira</b> – friends are supportive of singing,
		Difficulties relating to peers	1	<b>Holly</b> – finds it difficult to relate to peers and prefers to learn by self & transferred electives due to incident with peers & questions why people chose the subject if they didn't want to be in the class,
	Influence of peers	Lack of influence on choice*	5	<b>Annie</b> – friends not an influence on final choice, <b>Carly</b> – intrinsic enjoyment of singing would keep her participating despite the opinions of others, <b>Liam</b> – would still choose music without friends due to personal interest, <b>Dean</b> – based on personal interest not friends, <b>Max</b> – friends had no opinions on him taking music,
		(influenced by) Opinions of peers	2	<b>Carly</b> – can be influenced and seek out the perceptions of others, <b>Isiah</b> – didn't choose because no friends were taking it,
		Distractions*	3	<b>Jasmine</b> – brother's engagement influenced by friends, <b>Carly</b> – peers can cause distractions, <b>Isiah</b> – friends can be distracting,

	Friends don't participate unless personally interested, relevant or enjoyable		Enjoy - 3 Relevant - 1 Interesting – 3 (6 altogether)	<b>Jasmine</b> – friends don't participate if not relevant or interesting, <b>Avery</b> – friends enjoy other things more so choose other subjects, <b>James</b> – don't take cause they don't like it, <b>Liam</b> – choice dependent on liking and enjoying playing, <b>Jenna</b> – friends chose subjects that aligned with interest and personal identities, <b>Mira</b> – friends chose subjects that aligned with personal interest,
	Creative, not musical friends*		2	<b>Annie</b> – close friends creative but not musical, <b>Mira</b> – sporty and artistic friends but not musical,
	Summative & Descriptive Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Friends don't influence the choice of electives (but can affect the enjoyment and engagement in class), but is more determined by personal factors and interest (Max, James, Liam)</li> <li>- Jasmine: wants to learn but notices others who don't procrastinate and bludge</li> <li>- Jenna: friends outside of school in performing arts high</li> </ul>		
Interest	Personal Factors and Characteristics	Familial support and interest	8	<b>Annie</b> – friends and family act as support network, <b>Holly</b> – family history of drop outs, <b>Max</b> – gets support from parents, <b>Liam</b> – musical family and encouragement to participate in music & supports music room and instruments in the home, <b>Jenna</b> – parents both supportive but separated (mum strict, dad soft-both encourage) & participation dependent on family support, <b>Mira</b> – parents encouraged singing over soccer, <b>Dean</b> – rough family life but supported by church community and parents show interest in musical endeavours, <b>Avery</b> – family shows support in attending performances,
		Personal interests	8	<b>Jasmine</b> – has intrinsic interest in piano, <b>Carly</b> – innate interest in piano, <b>Holly</b> – has a job for independence and likes & music blocks out other things going on, <b>Alice</b> – interest as a determining factor in being 'musical', <b>Liam</b> – defines self by musical identity, <b>Jenna</b> – music is personally relevant and interesting, <b>Mira</b> – long-standing interest in music from early choir exp, <b>Dean</b> – intrinsic connection and interest in music determines musicality,

		Not musical, but creative family	6	<b>Annie</b> – creative not musical family, <b>Jasmine</b> – creatively inclined family with no musical family members noted, <b>Carly</b> – creatively inclined siblings and parents, <b>Holly</b> – musical godparent who taught brother how to play, <b>Grace</b> – father has piano skills from childhood but rest of family is more creative than musical, <b>Dean</b> – some background but not overly musical parents,
		Self-taught status*	4	<b>Avery</b> – self-taught with singing and ukulele for the most part, <b>Mira</b> – self-taught vocalist, <b>Isiah</b> – self-taught guitarist, <b>Dean</b> – self-taught guitarist,
		Musical family	1	<b>Avery</b> – relatively musical family with mother and father participating in some form of music throughout their lives (father trained opera singer),
		Non-musical family	1	<b>Isiah</b> – sporty younger siblings,
		Performance anxiety	1	<b>Grace</b> – experiences perf anxiety which has always been an issue & influencing choice not to continue,
		Social/trouble relating	Trouble relating - 2	<b>Holly</b> – trouble relating to peers and learning in classroom environment & independent & suspended for most of term 2 and moved 5 different schools, <b>Alice</b> – describes self as social, <b>Avery</b> – difficulty reading social cues, <b>Isiah</b> – quiet in class but describes self as social,
			Social - 1	
			Quiet inclass/social outside - 1	
	Thoughts, perceptions and beliefs	Choice based on future relevance	4	<b>Annie</b> – spends time and energy on subjects that relates to future careers, <b>James</b> – choice of related subjects to future military career, <b>Grace</b> – elective choices aligned with future goals, <b>Jenna</b> – sees utility value in music and creative interests so her creative passions usually take precedence over sports,
		Choice based on interest*	2	<b>Max</b> – dictates enjoyment and therefore choice, <b>Grace</b> – elective choices aligned with personal interests (subjects that are interesting and fun),

		Effort	1	<b>James</b> – interest determines effort applied and time spent on activities
		Perception of importance	1	<b>Annie</b> – not favourite or most important subject,
	Personal musical involvement	No lessons	9	<b>Annie</b> – no formal lessons, <b>Jasmine</b> – never taken formal lessons, <b>Carly</b> – no lessons, <b>Holly</b> – no lessons, <b>Alice</b> – no lessons, <b>James</b> – no lessons, <b>Mira</b> – no formal voice lessons, <b>Isiah</b> – no formal lessons, <b>Dean</b> – no formal lessons,
		Lessons taken	5	<b>Avery</b> – used to sing but became too expensive, <b>Max</b> – guitar lessons since year 1, <b>Liam</b> – took lessons in piano and theory from a young age (attended a music school in Ireland), <b>Grace</b> – piano lessons & musical theory AMEB but stopped (was going to pick up again), <b>Jenna</b> – voice lessons,
		Participation outside of school	4	<b>Avery</b> – band, <b>Max</b> – bands (x2), <b>Jenna</b> – stage productions and ensembles and choirs, <b>Dean</b> – bands and church music participation,
		Instrument at home	4	<b>Carly</b> – had a keyboard in the home growing up but removed as no one used it, <b>Alice</b> – keyboard at home, <b>Avery</b> – ukulele, <b>Liam</b> – own music studio with instruments/recording equipment etc at home,
		Previous experience	3	<b>Holly</b> – previous history of being left behind in education, <b>Liam</b> – had early exposure and learning of instrument and aural theory & enjoys activities the longer he has been participating in them, <b>Mira</b> – need a level of interest and understanding to learn,
		Favourite subject	?	????????????????????
		Music Camp	2	<b>Avery</b> – attended camp for past 4 years and hopes to be a student tutor in future & fav memories stemming from the camp, <b>Jenna</b> – attends music camp and returned as student tutor in 2018
	Relationship between music & sport	Affinity for sport and music	6	<b>Jasmine</b> – participates in soccer outside of school, <b>Carly</b> – likes sport and music, <b>Holly</b> – used to participate in Oztag but lost interest, <b>James</b> – sporty but not creative, <b>Grace</b> – music vs netball, <b>Jenna</b> – music vs hockey,

		Participation in both sport and music	3	<b>Liam</b> – piano and soccer and martial arts, <b>Grace</b> – likes netball and piano, <b>Jenna</b> – enjoys hockey and music (balance between but creative usually takes precedence out of utility value),
		Types of sports/ensembles	3	<b>Liam</b> – soccer/martial arts, <b>Grace</b> – netball, <b>Jenna</b> – hockey
	Outside activities	Dance	2	<b>Carly</b> – used to dance, <b>Mira</b> – takes Serbian dancing outside of school (along with Serbian language classes),
		Drama	2	<b>Jasmine</b> – participates in drama classes outside of school, <b>Avery</b> – drama classes
	Primary/Secondary previous experience and relationship	Primary school memories	Choir - 8	<b>Annie</b> – few memories, <b>Jasmine</b> – choir memories, <b>Carly</b> – choir & noted desire for more foundational experiences, <b>Alice</b> – singing and basic untuned percussion & believes has improved from current accounts by cousins, <b>Avery</b> – choir & recorder, <b>Liam</b> – no memories of music beyond the school bell, <b>Grace</b> – choir and recorder, <b>Jenna</b> – started singing in Year 3 after choir inspiration, <b>Mira</b> – choir, <b>Isiah</b> – choir, <b>Dean</b> – was the forgotten class,
			Recorder - 2	
			None - 2	
			Percussion - 1	
		Sig. of the school experience to encourage involvement	8	<b>Jasmine</b> – school started her interest in piano, <b>Carly</b> – noted desire for more foundational experiences in primary school to support exposure in high school, <b>Alice</b> – school music sparked interest, <b>Grace</b> – school music reignited her passion for playing ‘fun’ music and became less of a chore and more enjoyable, <b>Jenna</b> – began singing in year 3 after choir inspired her, <b>Mira</b> – choir inspired interest in music and singing & ignited passion and interest, <b>Dean</b> – school 7/8 exp encouraged to keep participating and develop skills further, <b>Liam</b> – became more interested again after playing in Year 7 and 8 with different repertoire than his private lessons,
		First formal music ed. In Year 7	5	<b>Annie</b> – first exp of formal music in year 7, <b>Jasmine</b> – first formal ed in year 7, <b>Carly</b> – first exp of music in year 7, <b>Isiah</b> – first exp of formal music in year 7, <b>Dean</b> – first exp of music in year 7,

	Summative & Descriptive Notes	- Grace: tuned out in secondary school (year 7/8 music) as the content was familiar to that studied previously outside of school (Liam)		
Challenge	Self-concept in music	Musically skilled	2	<b>Liam</b> – learnt piano and music theory from young age, <b>Mira</b> – compares self to classmates and assesses self as less skilled but this encourages her to work harder,
		Bored	2	<b>Liam</b> – can get bored with presented tasks as skills are more developed & experiments when bored, <b>Grace</b> – was bored with year 7/8 music as already knew content and had previous knowledge,
		Reliance on auditory skills	2	<b>Isiah</b> – plays by ear and uses tab scores, <b>Dean</b> – relies on auditory skills,
		Average*	1	<b>Max</b> – average self-concept,
		Good*	1	<b>Holly</b> – high achievement (A) at previous school which was more theory based
	Perception of difficulty	Hard	2	<b>Mira</b> – more difficult than first anticipated, <b>Isiah</b> – no choice of elective (9/10) music because he anticipated how complex the course was and that his peers had superior knowledge & struggled adapting to musical terminology,
		Aural is difficult	5	<b>Max</b> – finds aural work difficult, <b>Grace</b> – noted struggles of peers and their preference of prac due to lack of previous exp, <b>Jenna</b> – finds aural/theory difficult as no previous experience, <b>Isiah</b> – aural is difficult because of no understanding or prev exp, <b>Dean</b> – difficulty of the writing component which can influence final choice,
		Easy	3	<b>Avery</b> – finds music easy, <b>Liam</b> – not difficult unless no prev exp or disliked, <b>Grace</b> – finds aural components easier than practical/playing tasks due to extensive previous experience,
		Playing is difficult	3	<b>Holly</b> – difficulty playing and producing music, <b>Grace</b> – does not like performing (anxiety), <b>Dean</b> – perf is easier depending on the piece,

		Reading music is difficult	3	<b>Jasmine</b> – finds it hard to read music (made easier with note names), <b>Alice</b> – acknowledged learning curve associated with reading music, <b>Jenna</b> – finds reading music and notation difficult (blames bad teachers and personal experience)
		Prefer playing	2	<b>Avery</b> – prefers playing activities during lessons, <b>Liam</b> – practice needed to develop skills,
		Initial learning curve of playing an instrument	2	<b>Max</b> – difficulty first learning to play, <b>Dean</b> – frustration of initial learning curve of playing,
		Different to other subjects taken	4	<b>Grace</b> – different to other subjects taken currently & break from more stressful subjects, <b>Dean</b> – diff to other subjects as you have to rely on your own skills, <b>Annie</b> – able to escape and have downtime from other more stressful subjects, <b>Avery</b> – can relax and clear head
		Spectrum (neither easy nor hard)	1	<b>Max</b> – finds nothing particularly easy,
		Achievement not comparable with other subjects	1	<b>Carly</b> – not comparable with achievement in other subjects (more important to do well in other subjects),
	Mediators of difficulty	Previous Experience	7	<b>Max</b> – finds aural difficult due to lack of previous exp, <b>Liam</b> – difficult when there is a lack of previous experience, <b>Grace</b> – influenced her decision to continue as the subject wasn't as difficult for her & linked with making the subject easier through having prior knowledge, <b>Jenna</b> – difficulty influenced by past bad teachers who did not give adequate foundational knowledge & lack of prev exp can lead to current difficulties, <b>Mira</b> – has a negative self-concept from lack of prev exp, <b>Isiah</b> – aural is difficult because of lack of prev exp, <b>Dean</b> – finds personally difficult because of a lack of background exp and knowledge,

		Personal skills and understanding	6	<b>Annie</b> – difficulty depends on innate ability, <b>Alice</b> – difficulty influenced by individual learning rates, <b>Liam</b> – understanding needed to be ‘good’, <b>Grace</b> – difficulty linked with innate musical ability, <b>Jenna</b> – difficulty mediated by personal skills, <b>Isiah</b> – difficulty influenced by understanding related to task,
		Enjoyment	5	<b>Jasmine</b> – difficulty depends on liking what you play, <b>Alice</b> – difficulty related to enjoyment (lack of makes more difficult), <b>Liam</b> – difficult when something is not liked, <b>Grace</b> – difficulty linked with a lack of passion, <b>Isiah</b> – difficult related to enjoyment of the task,
		Interest	3	<b>Jasmine</b> – personal difficulty linked with interest, <b>Alice</b> – difficulty influenced by and related to individual interest (lack of makes more difficult), <b>Avery</b> – difficulty linked with interest,
		Dependent on the task	3	<b>Max</b> – difficulty is dependent on the task being completed, <b>James</b> – difficulty linked with the complexity of a piece and requirements of a task, <b>Dean</b> – playing is easier depending on the piece
		Effort	3	<b>Carly</b> – not difficult when effort applied, <b>James</b> – applying more effort in Year 9/10 due to increased significance of the skills/content being taught with parental expectations raised to meet & made easier through time and commitment, <b>Dean</b> – found out had a broader vocal range from peer challenge in own time/on weekend,
		Teachers	2	<b>Jenna</b> – difficulty influenced by bad teachers in the past, <b>Isiah</b> – struggled adapting to musical terminology but supported by Mrs Maple,
		Attitude/approach	1	<b>Annie</b> – difficulty depends on your attitude and approach,
		Peer distractions	1	<b>Carly</b> – distractions can increase difficulty,
		Utility Value	1	<b>Avery</b> – difficulty linked with the importance placed on school achievement and skills gathered,
		Summative & Descriptive Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Holly: “if it was easy, it wouldn’t be enjoyable”</li><li>- Perception of difficulty doesn’t necessarily determine ‘good’ (James)</li></ul>	



Enjoyment	Emotions associated with music involvement	Passion	5	<b>Annie</b> – being ‘good’ comes from passion and feel for music, <b>Max</b> – has a passion for music more than other subjects, <b>Grace</b> – school music reignited her passion for playing more modern songs (used to AMEB), <b>Jenna</b> – passionate, <b>Mira</b> – liked but passion developed from more opps and exps,
		Like	5	<b>Holly</b> – not social but likes music, <b>Max</b> – likes to play, <b>James</b> – likes music, <b>Grace</b> – has always liked music, <b>Isiah</b> – enjoys music and wants to be involved,
		Emotional affect	4	<b>Annie</b> – noted calming nature of music and ability to change her mood, <b>Holly</b> – blocks out everything else going on, <b>Avery</b> – part of identity (doesn’t know what else he would do) & allows to express emotion & help to find inner joy, <b>Grace</b> – finds relaxation in coming to music,
		Fun	4	<b>Jasmine</b> – finds music fun, <b>Avery</b> – finds music fun, <b>James</b> – finds music fun, <b>Grace</b> – finds music fun after school band made playing fun again,
		Love	4	<b>Alice</b> – loves music, <b>Grace</b> – loves the subject and teachers and playing with peers, <b>Mira</b> – loves and is one of the only things she enjoys at school, <b>Avery</b> – loves music,
		Deep satisfaction	2	<b>Avery</b> – deep enjoyment and satisfaction derived from involvement, <b>Jenna</b> – deeply enjoys music,
		Excited	1	<b>Carly</b> – excited to come to music class
	Enjoyment of music aspects	Practical lesson components	6	<b>Jasmine</b> – enjoys ‘doing’ music, <b>Carly</b> – enjoys music apart from “just writing”, <b>Alice</b> – enjoys playing more than aural, <b>Isiah</b> – likes prac lessons, <b>Dean</b> – prefers practical lessons, <b>Avery</b> – enjoys practical elements of the class,
		Dislike aural lessons	3	<b>Jasmine</b> – pref playing over writing lessons, <b>Carly</b> – prefers to ‘do’ and dislikes writing, <b>Isiah</b> – doesn’t like theory lessons (doesn’t make sense, no prev experience)

		Atmosphere, peers and class environment	2	<b>Grace</b> – enjoys the atmosphere of the classroom and playing with peers & would miss the class and subject if she dropped it, <b>Jenna</b> – prefers singing with girls from class and friends,
	Influence on enjoyment	Previous experience/background knowledge	3	<b>Annie</b> – linked enjoyment with previous experience had in the area, <b>Liam</b> – enjoys outside activities because of length of time being involved & enjoys subjects with previous knowledge, <b>Isiah</b> – no prev experience so theory/aural doesn't make sense,
		Bad Experiences	1	<b>Jenna</b> – prev bad eisteddfod experience which turned her off of competitive singing,
		Teachers	1	<b>Grace</b> – loves teacher
	Reasons for enjoyment	Develop skills further	4	<b>Jenna</b> – enjoys learning about music, <b>Mira</b> – wants to know more about music, <b>Isiah</b> – gets satisfaction from learning new songs and improving skills, <b>Dean</b> – wants to develop skills further,
		Personal interest	4	<b>Alice</b> – enjoyment/satisfaction from personal interest & chose music because interested and enjoys, <b>Max</b> – plays at least an hour a day as a personal goal, <b>Jenna</b> – finds music interesting, <b>Mira</b> – fav subjects are those she enjoys and is interested in,
		Different to other subjects	3	<b>Annie</b> – noted difference to other subjects taken due to affect on her, <b>Avery</b> – finds music different to his other subjects, <b>Grace</b> – finds music different to her other subjects (harder, more stressful),
		Reason for engagement at school	2	<b>Holly</b> – music as the reason she attends school, <b>Mira</b> – one of only things she enjoys at school,

	Enjoyment and choice	Links with choice	9	<b>Annie</b> – chooses subjects she likes and has a passion for, <b>Alice</b> – chose because loves music and is interested, <b>Max</b> – wants to continue with music because he enjoys it, <b>Liam</b> – elective choice determined by passion and enjoyment, <b>Grace</b> – chose because liked atmosphere of classroom and playing with peers, <b>Mira</b> – enjoyed during early high school so continued as elective and HSC subject & not a popular elective because people don't enjoy, <b>Isiah</b> – chose because he was encouraged (by principal) to do something he enjoyed, <b>Dean</b> – choice dependent on enjoying music, <b>Avery</b> – chose elective music because found music really enjoyable and helps clear his head,
		Links with future participation	3	<b>Alice</b> – loves Child Studies which links with future career pathway, <b>Max</b> – wants to make a living doing something he enjoys, <b>Mira</b> – future career choice of music industry,
		Likes despite no personal relevance	2	<b>Annie</b> – enjoys music although it has no future relevance, <b>Carly</b> – no applicability to future goals but still loves,
	Enjoyment and achievement	Links with being 'good at music'	2	<b>Holly</b> – being 'good' requires enjoyment and understanding, <b>Jenna</b> – enjoyment is important to being 'good' (doesn't determine technical skill),
		Links with being 'musical'	1	<b>Alice</b> – enjoyment linked with being musical,
	Summative & Descriptive Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enjoyment linked with continued participation and engagement (Carly, Holly),</li> <li>- Did not care about music before Year 7 (James)</li> </ul>		
Engagement	Engagement actions and indicators	Focus	6	<b>Holly</b> – is focused and well-behaved in the music classroom (diff to other subjects), <b>Avery</b> – remains on topic during group work and is focused, <b>James</b> – focusing and working harder in Year 9 due to seriousness associated with choice as elective, <b>Grace</b> – prepared and studios and focused and attentive during class, <b>Isiah</b> – takes initiative to work smart not hard, <b>Dean</b> – most attentive and focused male class member,

		Effort	6	<b>Annie</b> – ability linked with effort applied & applies effort during class & believes should be assessed on effort not sound, <b>Jasmine</b> – effort on one instrument allows you to get better, <b>James</b> – need commitment and dedication to become ‘good’, <b>Jenna</b> – applies effort and time and significance status to music, <b>Mira</b> – believes effort is needed to spark interest & need to ‘try’ in order to be good at music, <b>Dean</b> – can achieve goals if he applies himself,
		Prefer prac	6	<b>Jasmine</b> – need to ‘do’ and interact with music in order to learn, <b>Carly</b> – prefers practical lessons, <b>Max</b> – importance of playing experiences, <b>Liam</b> – prefers playing activities (unsure whether would continue without these), <b>Dean</b> – prefers playing activities, <b>Alice</b> – want to play keeps her involved
		Practice in own time	5	<b>Jasmine</b> – plays at lunch with Carly, <b>Carly</b> – plays at lunch with Jasmine, <b>Max</b> – plays at least an hour per day as a personal goal & participates in bands and practices in own time, <b>Liam</b> – uses own music studio and produces/practices music, <b>Dean</b> – bands and music program at church,
		On task/distracted*	5	<b>James</b> – can get distracted by friends, <b>Grace</b> – prepared and studios, <b>Mira</b> – attentive and clearly is interested/enjoys, <b>Isiah</b> – engages in chat with friends when present (can get distracted), <b>Dean</b> – can get distracted by peers,
		Motivation	4	<b>Avery</b> – driven and determined in activities, <b>Grace</b> – self-motivated and driven, <b>Mira</b> – wants to study and learn more, <b>Dean</b> – wanted to learn how to play fluently so motivated to continue playing and learning,
		Participation*	3	<b>Avery</b> – participates in class discussions, <b>Mira</b> – participates in lessons and discussions, <b>Isiah</b> – quiet and generally works independently,
		Confidence	2	<b>Liam</b> – confidence in music skills and perception, <b>Avery</b> – confident of musical abilities but quiet student generally,
		Lessons	1	<b>Mira</b> – wants to start lessons & help parents pay,

	Engagement mediators and influences	Effect of previous experiences	3	<b>Alice</b> – difficulty and engagement linked with previous exp and familiarity with content, <b>James</b> – more time means more opportunity for development, <b>Jenna</b> – turning down a place in a performing arts high school and subsequently increasing her passions made her want to continue,
		Engage in relevant subjects*	1	<b>Annie</b> – chose subjects that develop knowledge and skills needed for future,
		Familial influences	2	<b>Jenna</b> – engagement dependent on familial support and encouragement, <b>Mira</b> – parents not supportive of musical professional aspirations,
		Expectations	2	<b>Grace</b> – puts pressure on herself to succeed & very competitive particularly in sporting environments, <b>Mira</b> – parental expectations to do well but not relate to music aspirations,
		Atmosphere of classroom	2	<b>Holly</b> – feels comfortable in the music classroom, <b>Grace</b> – enjoys the atmosphere of the classroom and peers,
		Personal interest	2	<b>Avery</b> – continues because he is “really into music” & intrinsic interest linked with engagement, <b>Max</b> – always listening to music,
		Teachers	2	<b>Holly</b> – engagement dependent on the teacher of the subject, <b>Avery</b> – influence of teacher on engagement and likes Mrs Maple,
		Passion	2	<b>Annie</b> – ability linked with passions, <b>Jenna</b> – wants to continue because her passions increased,
		Peers	1	<b>Holly</b> – engagement dependent on the students within the classroom,
		Relevance to future goals	1	<b>Annie</b> – music not significant to future goals,
		Dependent on task	1	<b>Liam</b> – engagement dependent on task (usually more engaged during prac)
		“Want to” mediates choice	1	<b>Holly</b> – chooses whether to engage and listen depending on whether she wants to & feels like she doesn’t want to be at school & wants to learn in music,

	Personal factors effecting engagement	Personal goals (reading music)	3	<b>Alice</b> – wants to learn how to read music (interested and determined), <b>Max</b> – wants to learn how to read musical scores, <b>James</b> – wants to learn to read musical scores and develop fluency,
		Level of music knowledge	3	<b>Max</b> – wants to improve music knowledge, <b>Liam</b> – good understanding and high level of technical skill & takes leadership roles, <b>Isiah</b> – would consider self musical but with limited musical vocab,
		Personal significance	2	<b>Avery</b> – continues because he is “really into music”, <b>Isiah</b> – always listening to music or playing something,
		Good self-concept*	2	<b>Liam</b> – feels like he is good at music and that music is something he is good at when compared with other subjects/people, <b>Grace</b> – would consider self musical,
		Average self-concept*	2	<b>Alice</b> – feels like an average student and doesn’t expect much of self, <b>James</b> – feels like has average skills (for the amount of time playing)
	Summative & Descriptive notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carly: wants to learn skills on different instruments</li> <li>- External factors maintain engagement like peers and teachers (Holly)</li> </ul>		
Future Relevance	Perception of significance	Importance of success and achievement	9	<b>Annie</b> – important to succeed or would move schools, <b>Carly</b> – importance of achievement based on utility value, <b>Holly</b> – importance dependent on utility value, <b>Max</b> – importance determined by relevance to future goals, <b>James</b> – hobby of music less important than other foundational skills needed for future career, <b>Grace</b> – motivated and focused to achieve & always prepared for assessments, <b>Jenna</b> – music as highlight relevant to goals and future music degree, <b>Mira</b> – important to do well considering HSC status and relevance to future, <b>Avery</b> – high importance of school and subjects/achievement as it shapes your future and credentials,

		Music as an important subject	6	<b>Holly</b> – sees music as important (based on utility value), <b>Max</b> – school music related to future goals, <b>Liam</b> – important in developing future goals, <b>Jenna</b> – sees music as important and assigns priority status to it & highly relevant to future goal of music industry/degree, <b>Mira</b> – believes music is important because of HSC status and utility value, <b>Avery</b> – sees music as an important subject in equipping you with skills to help people find peace and joy in other areas of life,
		Music as a non-important subject	4	<b>Annie</b> – not personally relevant or significant due to links with future goals, <b>Carly</b> – important if you want to do it in future, <b>Alice</b> – not useful to future aspirations, <b>Grace</b> – sees music as a hobby and netball as more of her interest,
	Links between choice and future utility value	Choice of career	14	<b>Annie</b> – architect, <b>Jasmine</b> – videography, <b>Carly</b> – hairdresser, <b>Holly</b> – writer or forensic officer, <b>Alice</b> – family/childcare/teacher, <b>Avery</b> – law or “something that helps people”, <b>Liam</b> – busk & musical roadtrip, <b>Grace</b> – physical sciences degree, <b>Jenna</b> – aspirations in music industry and science fields (choice of subjects to suit) & music degree, <b>Mira</b> – music career, <b>Isiah</b> – originally thought of leaving to pursue carpentry apprenticeship but wasn’t certain of choice (yet to decide), <b>Dean</b> – business or marketing degree at uni, <b>James</b> – military, <b>Max</b> – music

		Continued participation links with utility value	8	<b>Annie</b> – participates in subjects that link with her future goals and interests, <b>Jasmine</b> – importance of gathering skills needed for future life & perceptions of importance linked with utility value & subjects align with future goals & choice dependent on ‘wanting’ to do something going forward, <b>Carly</b> – appreciates the usefulness of subjects and distinguishes this from her enjoyment, <b>Alice</b> – will continue with child studies as it is relevant to her future goals & dislikes science subjects as finds them irrelevant and pointless & changed this perception of biology now with a better teacher, <b>Liam</b> – relevant to building passion and confidence needed for future goals, <b>Grace</b> – elective choices relate to future goals and interests, <b>Jenna</b> – choice of subjects links with relevance to future aspirations, <b>Dean</b> – continues out of needing it to receive an ATAR,
		Professional music career	6	<b>Avery</b> – sees professional music industry as too competitive and difficult to make money, <b>Liam</b> – sees music as his dream job and part of his future aspirations, <b>Grace</b> – never pictured self as a professional musician, <b>Jenna</b> – aspirations in the music industry, <b>Mira</b> – music career, <b>Isiah</b> – music as a possibility but isn’t certain,
		Music as a hobby	5	<b>Carly</b> – useful to pass time while ‘sweeping hair’, <b>Avery</b> – wants to use creative skills to help people find joy & sees music as a hobby not career, <b>James</b> – important as a hobby but not career, <b>Grace</b> – sees music as a hobby not career, <b>Dean</b> – hobby and through church but not music as a profession (would like to play at a large youth event),



		Music as irrelevant to future goals	5	<b>Annie</b> – not relevant to future goals, <b>Jasmine</b> – chose subjects relevant to future goals and skills needed, <b>Carly</b> – not important as doesn't want to do it in future, <b>Alice</b> – will continue with child studies as it is relevant to her future goals & not useful to future aspirations, <b>James</b> – music not relevant to military career needs or requirements so has chosen more academic subjects to suit & not personally relevant to future career options,
		Music as relevant to future goals	4	<b>Max</b> – chose music because of relevance to future goals and utility value, <b>Liam</b> – needed to build confidence and passions needed for music in future, <b>Jenna</b> – sees value in creative skills for the future, <b>Mira</b> – wants to pursue music career (high utility value),
	Personal factors	Self-concept	4	<b>Holly</b> – low self-perception and belief in abilities, <b>Liam</b> – feels like he is good so wants to continue, <b>Grace</b> – on-going choice influenced by performance anxiety, <b>Mira</b> – negative self-concept as compares to classmates and abilities/knowledge,
		Familial influences	3	<b>Annie</b> – deal with father to improve grades or would move schools, <b>Liam</b> – continue with music and maths to follow in family footsteps, <b>Jenna</b> – wants to pay parents back for the time and money invested growing up,
		Enjoyment	2	<b>Mira</b> – participates and continues because she enjoys and has had previous exp, <b>Dean</b> – continues out of liking music,
	Summative & Descriptive Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annie: her perception of future relevance did not affect the enjoyment or engagement in the moment but rather her decision to continue participating</li> <li>- Enjoyment is separate from future relevance and one isn't necessarily dependent on the other</li> </ul>		

## APPENDIX M - Heat Map Tables

### APPENDIX M.a - Strength of Influence of Engagement Behaviours (Personal and External Factors) on Choice and Engagement in Music Education

Participants		Personal Factors						External Factors				Future Relevance		Continued Choice (after school)
		Enjoyment		Interest		Challenge		Teachers		Peers				
		Choice	Engage.	Choice	Engage.	Choice	Engage.	Choice	Engage.	Choice	Engage.	Choice	Engage.	
Year 8	Annie	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	No
	Carly	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	2	No
	Jasmine	2	2	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	2	No
Year 9	Avery	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	2	No
	Alice	2	2	1	2	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	3	No
	Holly	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	No
	James	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	No
	Liam	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	Yes
	Max	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	Yes
Year 11	Dean	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	No
	Grace	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	1	No
	Isiah	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	No
	Jenna	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	Yes
	Mira	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	Yes

#### Key:

3	High positive influence
2	Medium positive influence
1	Low positive influence
0	No influence

*APPENDIX M.b - Strength of Influence of Engagement Behaviours (Personal and External Factors) on Choices related to Music Education*

Participants		ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS					Future Relevance	Continued Choice (after school)
		Personal Factors			External Factors			
		Enjoyment	Interest	Challenge	Teachers	Peers		
Year 8	Annie	2	1	2	1	1	3	No
	Carly	2	1	2	1	1	3	No
	Jasmine	2	1	3	1	1	3	No
Year 9	Avery	3	3	1	2	1	2	No
	Alice	2	1	3	1	1	3	No
	Holly	2	2	2	2	1	1	No
	James	2	1	2	1	1	2	No
	Liam	3	3	1	1	1	3	Yes
	Max	3	3	1	2	1	2	Yes
Year 11	Dean	3	3	2	2	1	3	No
	Grace	3	2	1	2	2	3	No
	Isiah	3	2	3	2	2	1	No
	Jenna	3	2	1	2	1	3	Yes
	Mira	3	3	2	2	1	2	Yes

**Key:**

<b>3</b>	High positive influence
<b>2</b>	Medium positive influence
<b>1</b>	Low positive influence
<b>0</b>	No influence

*APPENDIX M.c - Strength of Influence of Engagement Behaviours (Personal and External Factors) on Engagement in Music Education*

Participants		ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS					Future Relevance	Continued Choice (after school)
		Personal Factors			External Factors			
		Enjoyment	Interest	Challenge	Teachers	Peers		
Year 8	Annie	2	1	2	1	1	2	No
	Carly	2	1	2	2	1	2	No
	Jasmine	2	1	3	1	1	2	No
Year 9	Avery	3	3	1	3	2	2	No
	Alice	2	2	3	1	2	3	No
	Holly	2	2	2	3	2	1	No
	James	2	2	2	1	2	3	No
	Liam	3	3	1	1	3	2	Yes
	Max	3	3	1	2	1	2	Yes
Year 11	Dean	3	2	1	1	2	1	No
	Grace	2	2	1	3	3	1	No
	Isiah	2	2	2	2	2	1	No
	Jenna	3	2	2	2	1	2	Yes
	Mira	3	2	3	2	1	2	Yes

**Key:**

<b>3</b>	<b>High positive influence</b>
<b>2</b>	Medium positive influence
<b>1</b>	Low positive influence
<b>0</b>	No influence